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Volume 4 • Issue 2 • January 1999

PS Extreme

PLAYSTATION GAMES MAGAZINE'S UNOFFICIAL MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE PLAYSTATION



Crash leads the hit parade!

The 1998 Extreme Awards

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- EX**news:> p14
Knight meets Baby, FFVIII gets a date and a movie, Flash and fighters in your pocket, and Clash Bandicoot, all in the news.
- EX**ecute:> p22
Who doesn't like codes? We like 'em, you like 'em, we print 'em, you use 'em.
- EX**clusive:> p28
Another EXclusive frenzy of infos on GEX3, G.Police 2, assorted Eidos games and Ridge Racer 4. Nice.
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- EX**pecting:> p46
Expecting. A full-featured preview section with an American theme. Why not read it twice?
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- EX**rated:> p68
When it comes to ratings, there's only one place you should look. Right here baby! You got it! That's right! Uh huh! Whoa.
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Welcome to the January issue of PSExtreme. Besides celebrating the New Year and getting the opportunity to play all of the great games that were released for the holidays, this month represents a monumental occasion... my 30th birthday. It's funny to think that I've been playing video games for two-thirds of my life, starting way back with the Fairchild Channel F and Atari VCS, to present day with the PlayStation and, admittedly, the N64 (only for the good games, which are unfortunately few and far between). Along the way, I made a lot of pit stops and plunked down quite a few Benjamins to keep my hobby alive and feed the addiction. To this day, I still own my original Bally Astrocade, Colecovision, Vectrex, Apple II-plus, Commodore 64, Vic 20, Amiga 500, Atari 2600, 5200 7800 and Jaguar (with the CD), Intellivision, Turbo Express, Sega Master System (with the 3D glasses), Genesis and Saturn, 3DO, Neo Geo Gold, and the NES and Super NES. In fact, looking around the offices, most of us here have similar histories. Dave, our Publisher, has a comparable collection, going even a little further with obscure hardware such as the FM Towns (which he purchased for \$5,000 back in the early '90s just so he could play Afterburner and Turbo Outrun). Tim, our Production Director, is one of those guys that lasted for three days on Defender with one quarter and has a collection of over 300 arcade boards and rare coin-ops that would make any arcade owner seriously jealous. And Eric... well he's a little on the strange side. It seems that along with his classic collection of hardware and cartridges, he has kept all of his high scores written down on charts for just about every video game he's ever played. He's currently contesting some of the scores for Kaboom and Looping found in Walter Day's "The Official Video Game and Pinball Book of World Records." Do all of these years of gameplaying qualify us to be writing about, and critiquing the world of video games? Who knows? But you can bet this is more than just a job for us. It's obvious we're passionate about video games and what we do and, when we're hitting 60, we'll still be playing them in whatever form that might be.

Now, to the issue you have in your hands. We've got lots of cool EXclusives, such as Crystal D's GEX 3, Psygnosis' G-Police 2, Namco's R4 and a spotlight on Eidos. In addition, there are tons of reviews and previews, as well as our third annual Extreme Awards. The winners were chosen by vote among our staff, and you'll find some no-brainers, as well as a few surprises. We all had some tough choices to make this year, as there were plenty of great games released over the last 12 months. Congratulations to all of the publishers and developers that finished in the running. Well, that about wraps it up for now. We hope you enjoy the issue and we'll see you in thirty.

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Dear PSExtreme,

Love the mag guys, yada, yada.

I had to email you because of your latest review of Namco's Tales of Destiny. Your review was right on target. I'm tired of companies putting out 16-bit looking, rehashed-plot driven RPG's and then terming this style "classic gameplay" or "old-school role-playing". Every other genre of gaming, be it platform (Crash Bandicoot 3), racing (Gran Turismo), fighting (Tekken 3), or whatever, has evolved. It's time we expect role playing games to be the same; Final Fantasy VII should be more of a rule than an exception.

Finally, I do want to gripe about the current trend away from turn-based combat in role playing games. Granted, combat isn't as integral to a game as story and characterization, and I can appreciate the way RPG's have tried to reach different audiences with different styles of fighting. But when it comes down to it, if I wanted an action or "twitch" style of combat, I'd buy a different type of game, like Resident Evil 2. For the naysayers who think this a stale approach, I say that the games just aren't offering the options we need to revitalize this style. Or aren't offering the player the option (FFVII again the exception).

Like many others out there, I love RPG's and want to see them succeed on all the platforms. But I want them to evolve as well.

Richard Diaz
Centerville, OH

Dear PSExtreme,

I am sorry to say that the review of Tales of Destiny (Nov98) is the most ignorant review of a video game I've ever seen in 8 years of vg magazine reading.

I can always accept when a reviewer has a different opinion from mine

about a game, even a large difference. But by reading the text in Dave's review, he obviously has a rather severe dislike of RPG and did not even play more than 5 hours of the game. Hell, he didn't even mention anything off of the Dragon Ship.

He failed to mention the good points of the game (great dialogue and localization, 70 hours worth of gameplay, innovation battle system, etc.). He also failed to mention the bad points in the game (a long time before exploration of the world, unoriginal plot).

Dave obviously condemned the game within the first 2 minutes because of the SNES-look and played it long enough to find minor flaws to complain about before turning it off ("dialogue" in a speech bubble? That's in every RPG!).

If this is the type of review you encourage from your writers, than I can see I'll be reading a lot less of your magazine.

- Unright

A fine example of two different opinions of one game. Remember people, we love you all, whether you agree with us or not.

Dear PSExtreme,

Why am I writing? Oh well. I know it won't get published. Well, I love your mag. I like other mags but not as much as yours. Well, I'll get to the point. I disagree how you rated NFL Gameday 99 and Madden NFL 99. Madden has a smoother gameplay than Gameday. You rated Madden an 87% and Gameday an 98%. In Gameday, you can sack the quarterback easily and, half the time you do, it's roughing the passer. Well, I am done now. You can stop reading my letter and answer this question!!!!

Anon

The anti-GameDay flames have dropped off quite a bit this year, but we still get a few... Dave replies;

Dear Anon,

While I don't know that you actually ASKED a question, I'll do my best to answer the question I think you were getting to.

Why did I rate GameDay 99 higher than Madden 99? It's simply a better game. You say Madden is smooth and I say that, while character control (via analog) IS smooth, the coordination between the players and the field is not. In an effort to make the players look as realistic as they could, the design team was not able to achieve a frame rate of 30 fps. If you don't get 30 fps on the PlayStation, you are doomed to sluggish gameplay and control. I, like you, think the game looks great, but I don't agree with you on the gameplay. Madden has been, and continues to be, a "soft" gameplay experience. You don't really feel any speed, the impact of a hit, etc. Most of the other magazines (finally) seem to be agreeing with my opinion. Obviously, you've played both and you like Madden better. It is your purchase and your choice. Reviews are only one person's opinion -- but, I do get paid to do my research, play everything and render a (hopefully) educated opinion. I have played both games quite a bit since my review and I stand by my original analysis.

Dear PSExtreme,

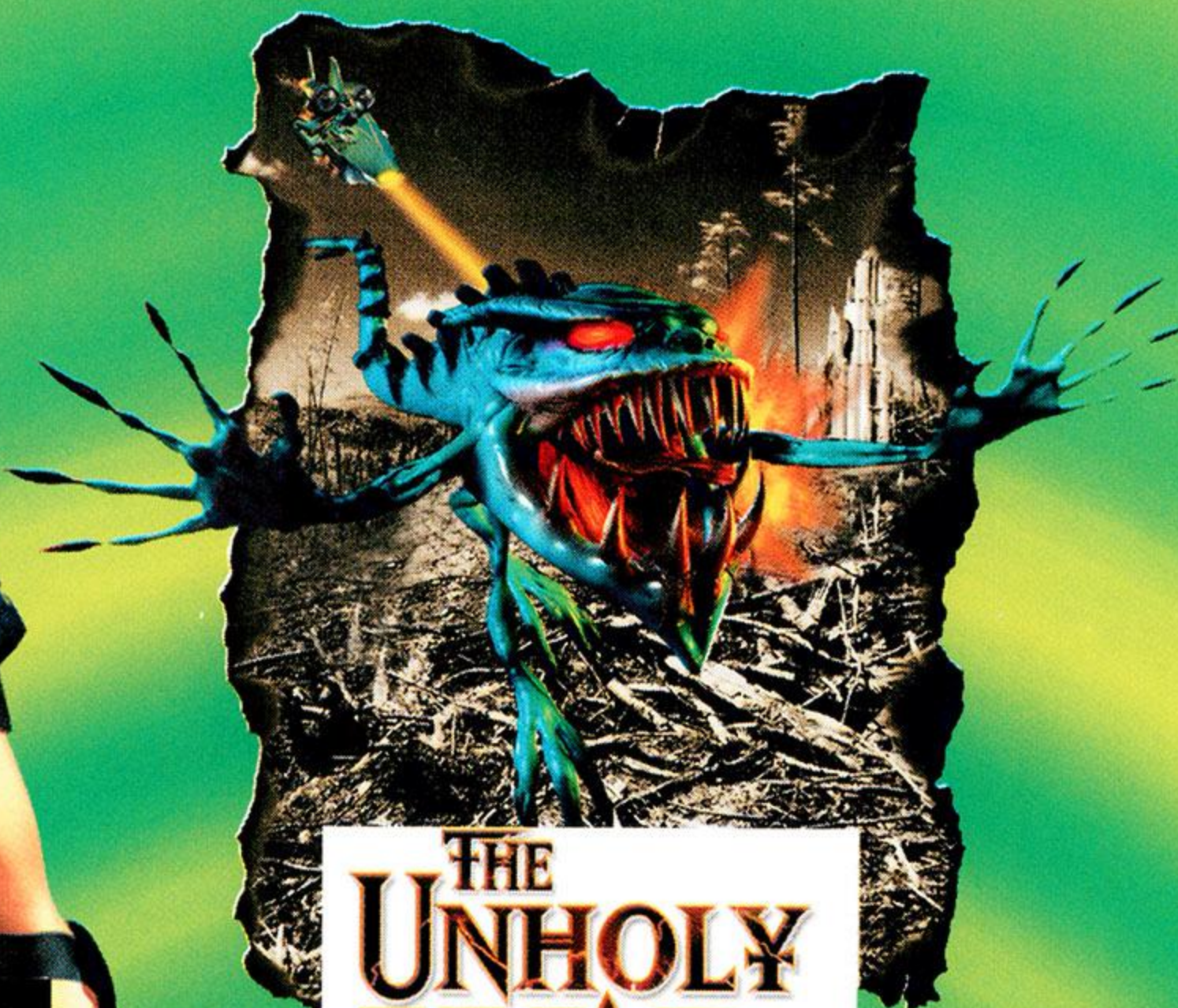
Hey dudes. I got a couple of questions for you:

1. What's up with EarthWorm Jim 3D? I haven't heard much about it. Is it still scheduled for a December 98 release?
2. What do you think about Thrill Kill being cancelled? I'm seriously pissed and I will never buy an EA game again (unless its a Square/EA game).
3. What do you think of the new Marilyn Manson CD?
4. Do you think its wise to buy a

EX/AL



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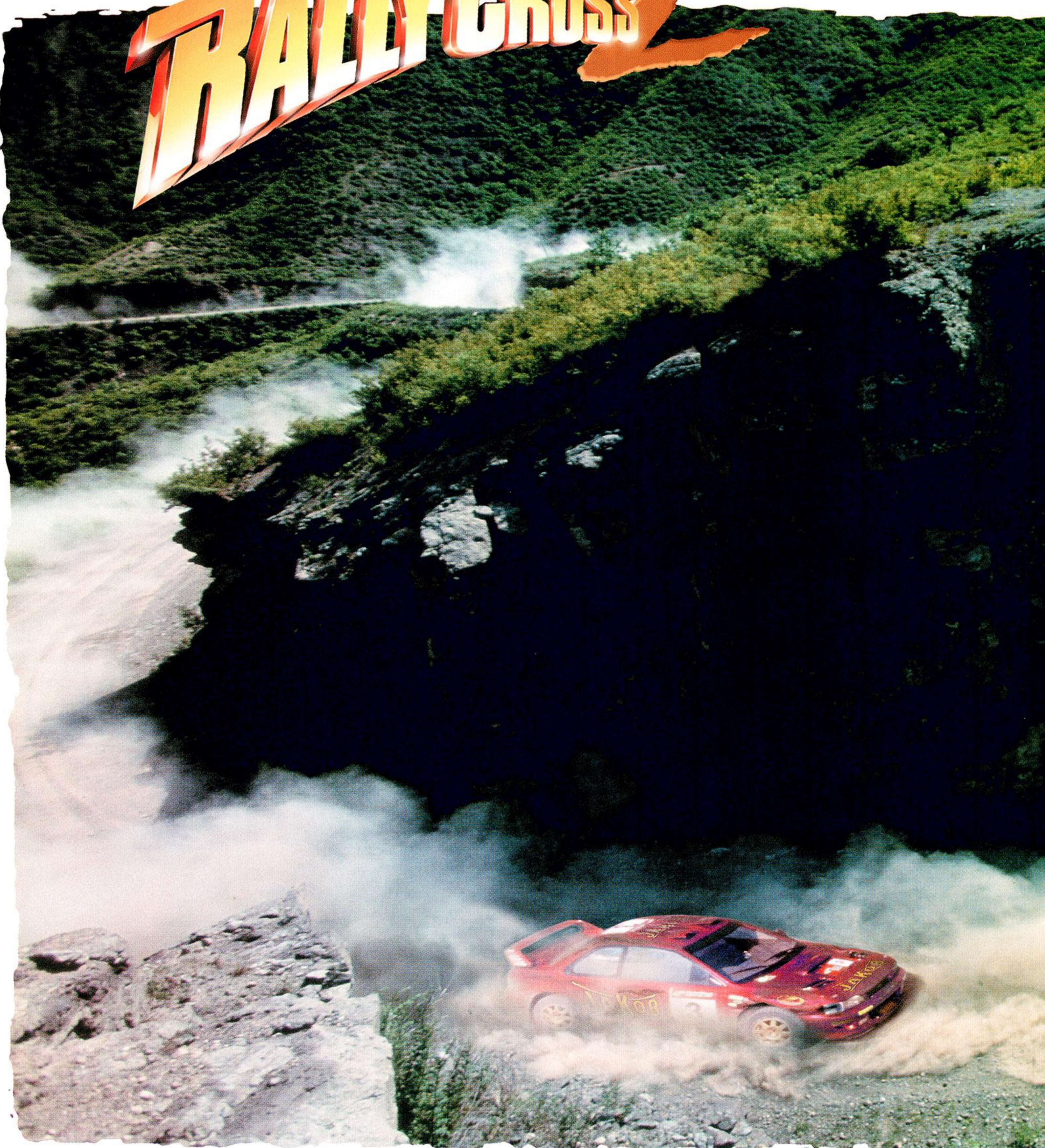
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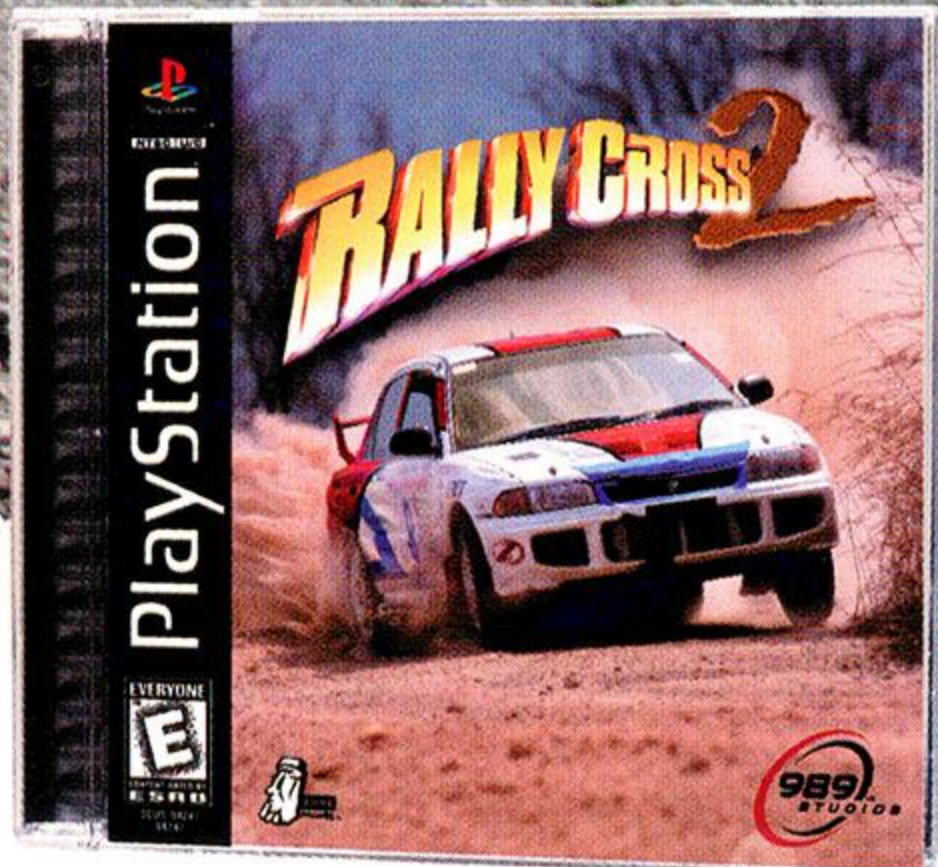
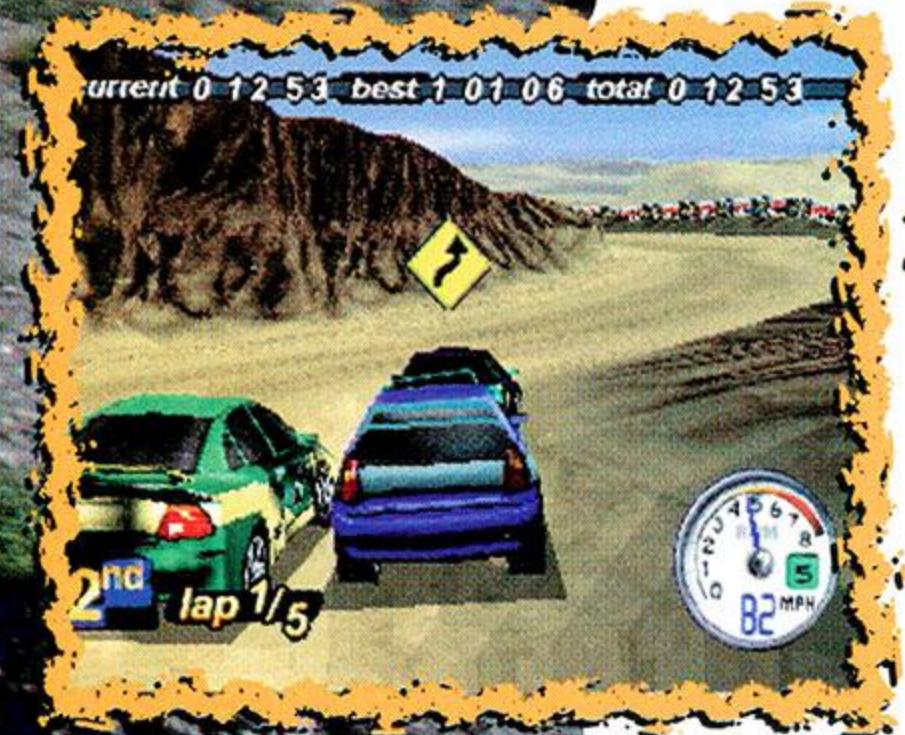
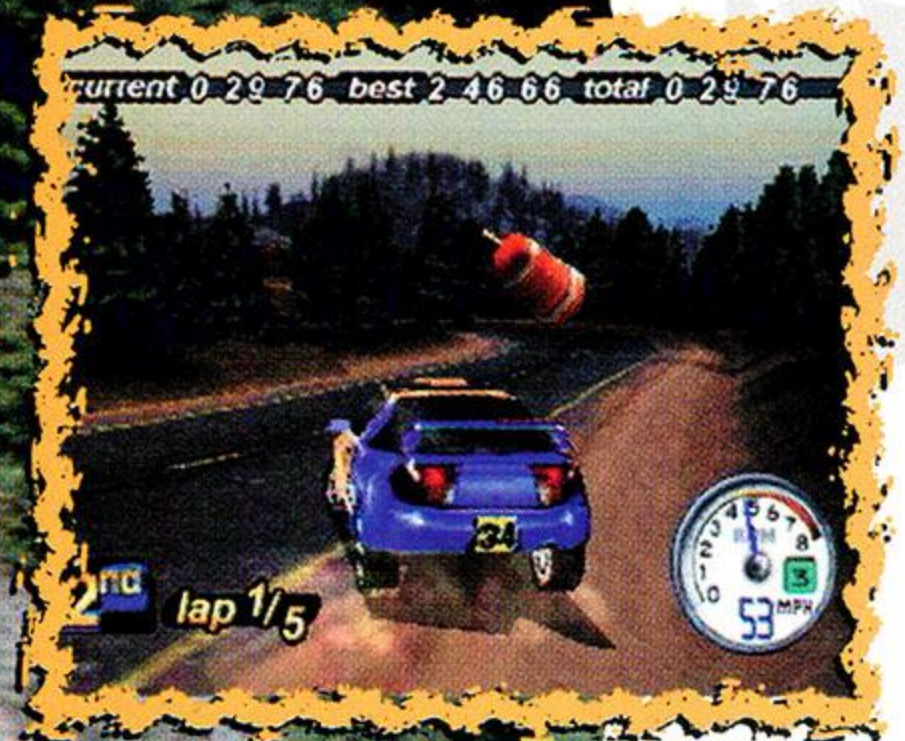
RALLY CROSS 2

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Multi-Tap now? I was going to buy one for Thrill Kill but it got cancelled. Is it true Twisted Metal 3 will be Multi-Tap compatible?

5. If I wanted to order one of your strategy guides by mail (instead of by phone), do I send the check to the same address as I would send a subscription?
6. I was just reading the December EXmail. Since you're giving out free subscriptions as Birthday presents, I invite you to my party. You can come over any time. It doesn't even have to be on my birthday. We can chill at the arcade or throw rocks at cars or something. Hey, you don't even have to give me a free subscription, you can just give me a PSExtreme T-Shirt... or a game. So how about it?

Thanks a lot. Also I think Miaka did an EXCELLENT job on the Parasite Eve walkthrough. It was straight to the point and short. Rock on PSExtreme

-SnOtt-

1. EWJ will probably be out in February or March of next year.
2. We think it's really cool because we got a copy of it before it was canceled so we get to play it and nobody else does. Nah, nah, nah. But seriously, the only thing Thrill Kill had going for it was its violence. The gameplay wasn't all that. It got boring quickly. However, the latest word is that a new publisher may pick it up and release it.
3. We're all stars now, in the poop shoe.
4. Twisted Metal 3 doesn't support the multi-tap...
5. Yep.
6. The subscription was only for the first kid to invite us to his party. You're the second, so you just get a big wet sloppy kiss from Shaggy. Send your address. Nooo, not

really. There's other ways to get free 6 month subscriptions to PSExtreme. Bought any strategy guides lately??

Dear PSExtreme,

Hi. My husband and I are avid readers of your magazine. We read some of the other gaming magazines from time to time as well. Recently, I rented a video game that you, unfortunately did not rate. (Not that I could find in my back issues.) Just to let you know - I prefer games like Tomb Raider, Resident Evil, Crash Bandicoot, Spyro, and so forth. My husband is more of the sports games kinda guy. We do both, however, like good graphics and fun. So, the game I wish you would have rated is kind of off base for the both of us "Reel Fishing." It is not exciting, gory, difficult, or even appealing to most gamers. It will only catch the eye of a certain few. I did pick it up at a rental store and, for a change in games, I rented it. It is good! The graphics are great, the music is soothing, and it is kinda fun. I looked in my back issues, and could not find a review of this game in your mag. I did, however, find a review of it in an issue from one of your competitors. Please, if you have reviewed it, and I just didn't catch it, please let me know what month you reviewed it in. If not — you should've. There aren't many games out there like this one (fishing) and adults enjoy their gaming just as much as any kid.

Thank you.

Brandie "squeaky" Wilson
Dallas, TX

Mark, our Ad guy, just luuuvves the fishing games. We'll review any fishing games that are sent to us. Hear that publishers?!? Send the fishing games! We've got ASCII's fishing controller and we're ready to reel!

Dear PSExtreme,

I've got a couple of questions about some games. First, is there going to be a game like "WCW/NWO Revenge" for the PlayStation? That game is a good looking game and I don't have an N64.

Secondly, what game is better; "NHL 99" or "National Hockey Night"? Finally, why is "Ninja: Shadow of Darkness" so stupid?

Jim Smith

P.S. Is "Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped" different and better than the other two?

"Thunder" from THQ will be like WCW/NWO Revenge. See this issue for a preview.

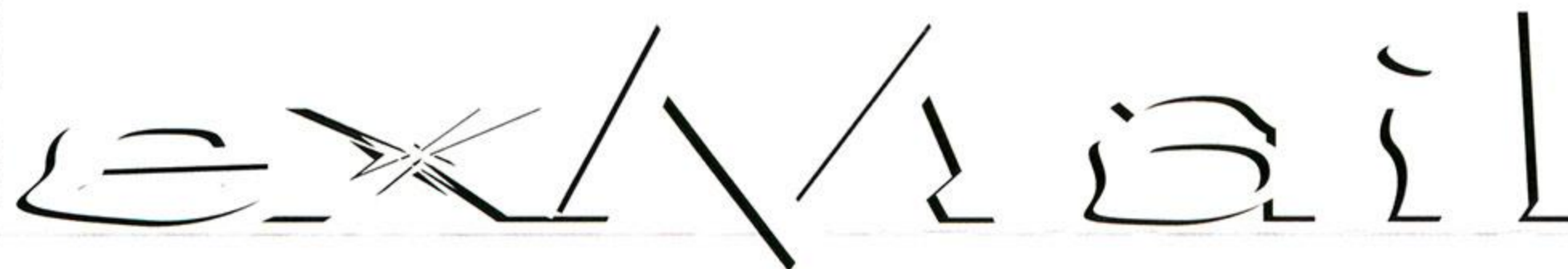
NHL 99 is better than National Hockey Night.

The answer to why Ninja might be stupid is very complex. A reasonable guess would be that Eidos put a sizable investment into the development of the game, thinking it would turn out well based on the concept presented to them by the developers. After a year or so of funding the game, it became apparent that it wasn't going to turn out to be so good. Rather than dumping the game and losing all the money they put into it, they decided to put a little extra dough into marketing and get it into stores, hoping to recoup some of the costs. What would you do? Remember, this is pure speculation on our part.

Crash 3 isn't much different, but there is a whole lot more of what you loved about the first two. There's also a few new gameplay elements like the motorcycle and jetski levels.

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PlayStation Gaming News

ACTIVISION'S NEW RPG "BABY"

With the recent success of Tenchu, Activision has delved deeper into the untapped pool of available import games released in Japan. Out of the hundreds of dating simulations, Tamagotchi-like monster-breeders and RPGs, there are a few diamonds in the rough that, taken the time and effort, will translate into great localized product. Such is the case with their newest acquisition, "Guardian's Crusade," which was released in Japan in October — under the name of "Knight and Baby." The game,



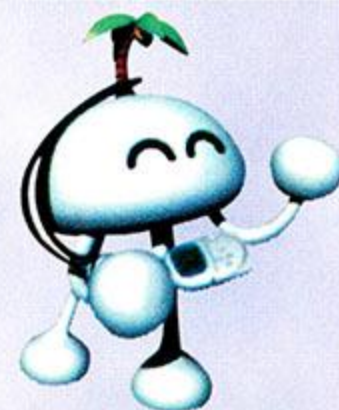
GUARDIAN'S CRUSADE

developed by Tamssoft (of Battle Arena Toshinden fame) is a 3D action/RPG that revolves around a young knight who must discover the strange origin of an orphaned baby monster he takes in. Guardian's Crusade will feature a strong storyline, bright and colorful graphics, a wide array of characters and enemies to interact with, the ability to collect and harness a squad of "Living Toys" — each with their own magical abilities, and a unique character development system where the player will determine the baby monster's abilities and personality growth based on their interactions with it. Expect to see Guardian's Crusade hit retail shelves in March of '99.

FINALLY, A FFVIII IMPORT RELEASE DATE

Square Japan recently announced an official release date for FFVIII overseas. The highly anticipated eight installment in this long-running RPG series will arrive for Japanese gamers on February 11th, spanning a whopping four CDs. While this is great news for our gaming cousins in the Land of the Rising Sun, there is still no word of an American ship date. Square has promised a much quicker translation turn-around this time, which leads us to speculate the US version will be ready by Summer. Let's keep our fingers crossed. One other notable tidbit of related FFVIII info: the game will be compatible with the upcoming digital "PocketStation." More to come...

JUMPING FLASH IN YOUR POCKET...

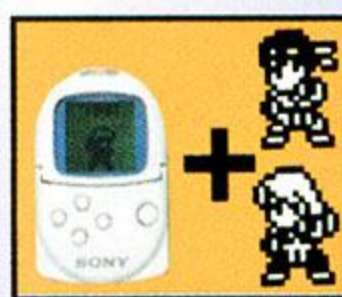


In other PocketStation news, it was recently reported in the latest Japanese Dengeki PlayStation magazine that Jumping Flash 3 is currently in development and will make heavy use of the little

PDA. Instead of controlling the mechanical jumping rabbit Robbit, JF3 has you taking on the role of one of those little white Muu Muus. While details about the gameplay is still a little on the sketchy side, it's said that the game will feature an unbelievable 100-plus minigames that can be downloaded into the PocketStation.

STREET FIGHTER IN YOUR POCKET, TOO

The Japanese release of Street Fighter Zero 3 (Street Fighter Alpha 3 in the States) will also make use of Sony's little peripheral. Any of the game's playable characters can be downloaded to the PocketStation, where you will then be able to cultivate and raise them like you would on a Tamagotchi. In addition, it is said that you will be able to pit your "virtual" Street Fighters against a friend's via the infra-red function. While there has been no official word from Sony or Capcom on whether this feature will remain in the US version, our take is that it's most likely.



POCKET FIGHTERS!

FINAL FANTASY: THE MOVIE, A REALITY

Square recently announced new information regarding their partnership with Columbia Pictures on the upcoming Final Fantasy movie. With production already well underway at their Hawaii studios, Final Fantasy: The Movie is scheduled for release in 2001. The screenplay has been adapted and written by Al Reinert, who was nominated for an Academy Award for his work on Apollo 13 and Columbia Pictures is set to distribute the film worldwide (with the exception of Japan and Asia). Envisioned by Hironobu Sakaguchi — the long-running series designer and creator — FF: The Movie will be the first computer-generated, animated motion picture with photo-real human characters as the cast.

EA SCORES EXCLUSIVE SOCCER RIGHTS

The sports juggernaut continues its aggressive acquisition tactics, buying game companies and sports licenses alike, with their latest "coup" — the exclusive rights to the world's three top soccer brands: FIFA Brand, FIFA World Cup (2002, 2006)



and Euro 2000, the UEFA European Football Championship. The agreement was signed in Geneva, Switzerland with ISL Worldwide, the official marketing partner of FIFA and UEFA. The deal, which locks up the rights for the next eight years, will allow EA to publish games using FIFA Brand, FIFA World Cup and UEFA EURO 2000 licenses for the PS, N64 and PC.

SONY CO-SPONSORS CHARITABLE EVENT WITH 49ERS

SCEA recently teamed up with the San Francisco 49ers Foundation as a sponsor for a charitable fundraiser. The event was held at the Great Entertainer pool hall in San Francisco and tickets sold for \$75.00 a pop. In addition to great food and live music, attendees got to rub elbows with a host of 49er players, including J.J. Stokes, Darnell Walker, Jim Druckenmiller, Terrell Owens, Junior Bryant and Lee Woodal, while they competed head-to-head in a Gran Turismo tournament. The winner, Darnell Walker, won a PlayStation and several of Sony's popular games, which were donated to his favorite charity. All of the proceeds from the event went to various Bay Area charities, such as the Make a Wish Foundation and the Boys and Girls Club.

CRASH, MEET CLASH

While this doesn't necessarily fall under news, we thought we'd show you a picture of the good, ol' US



CLASH OF THE CRASHES

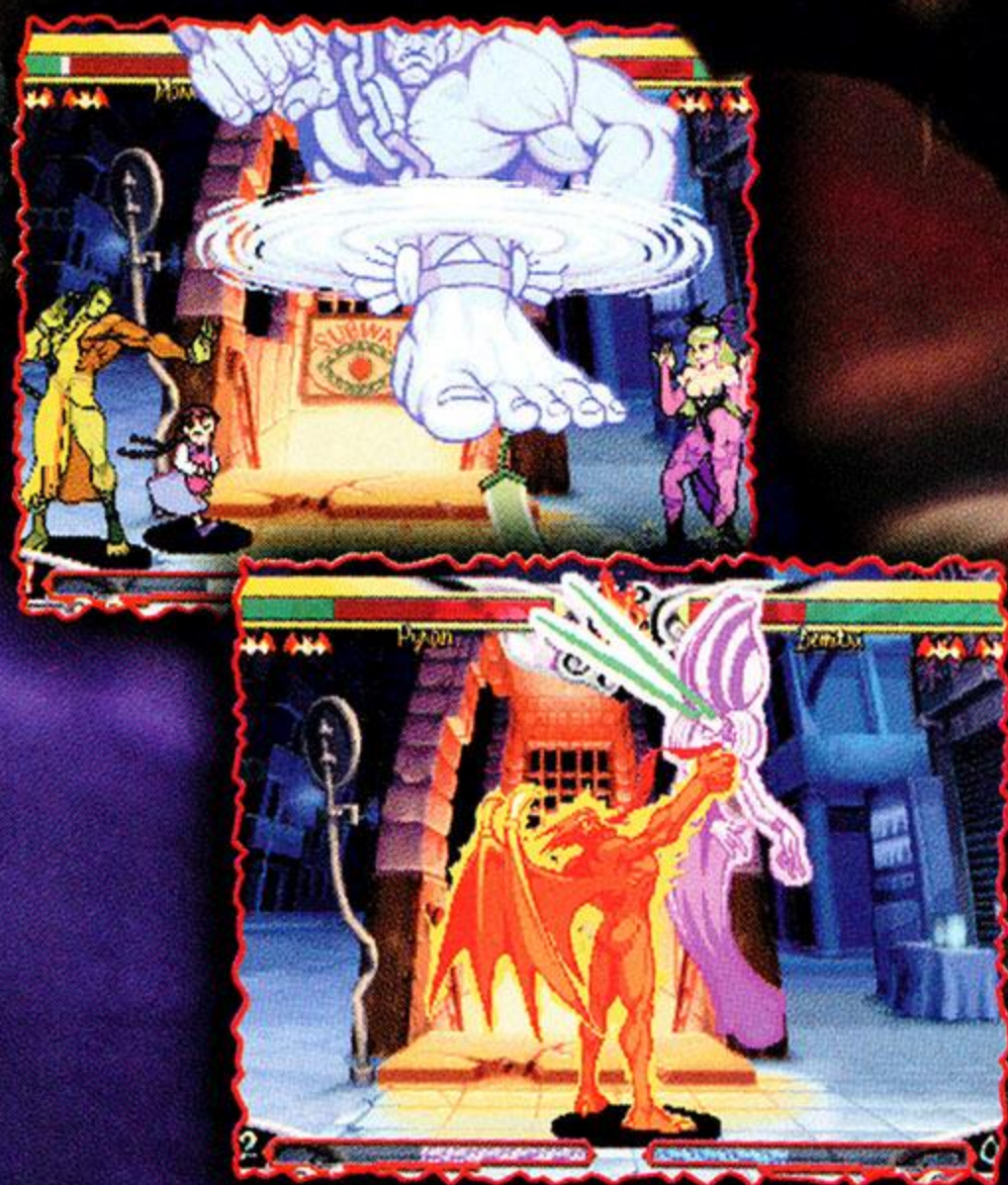
Crash that we've come to know and love from the hilarious TV spots meeting up with his Japanese counterpart at Universal Studios. The Crash Bandicoot series is one of the few PlayStation games to achieve unbelievable international success, selling millions of copies world-wide.

PS

EX NEWS

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DARKSTALKERSTM 3

CAPCOM



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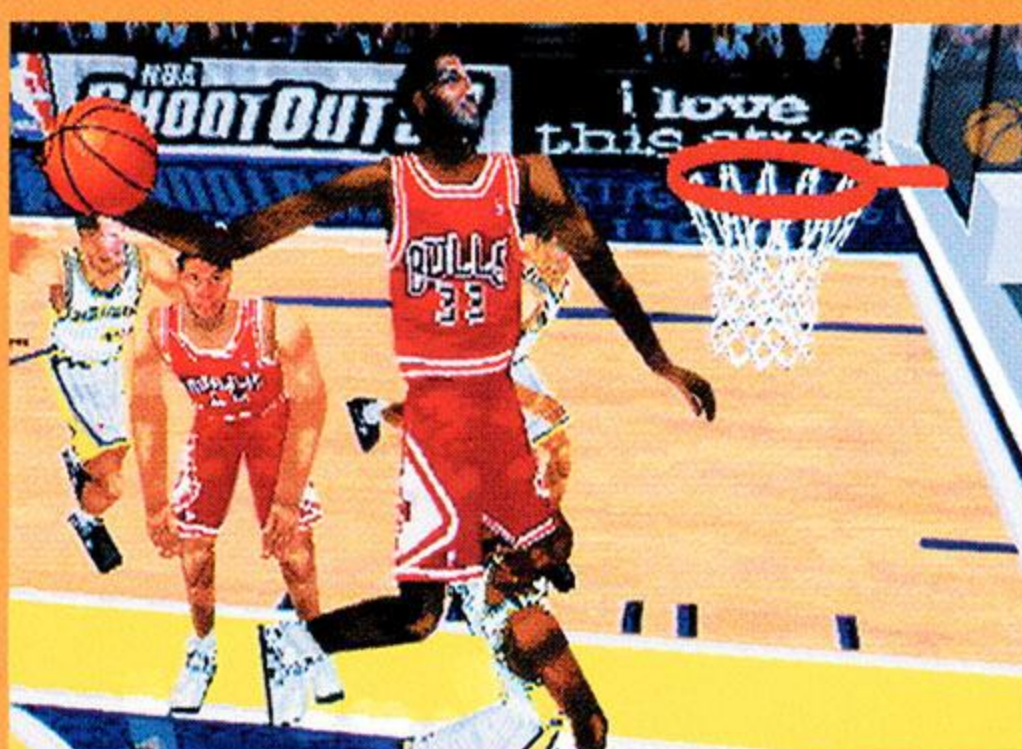
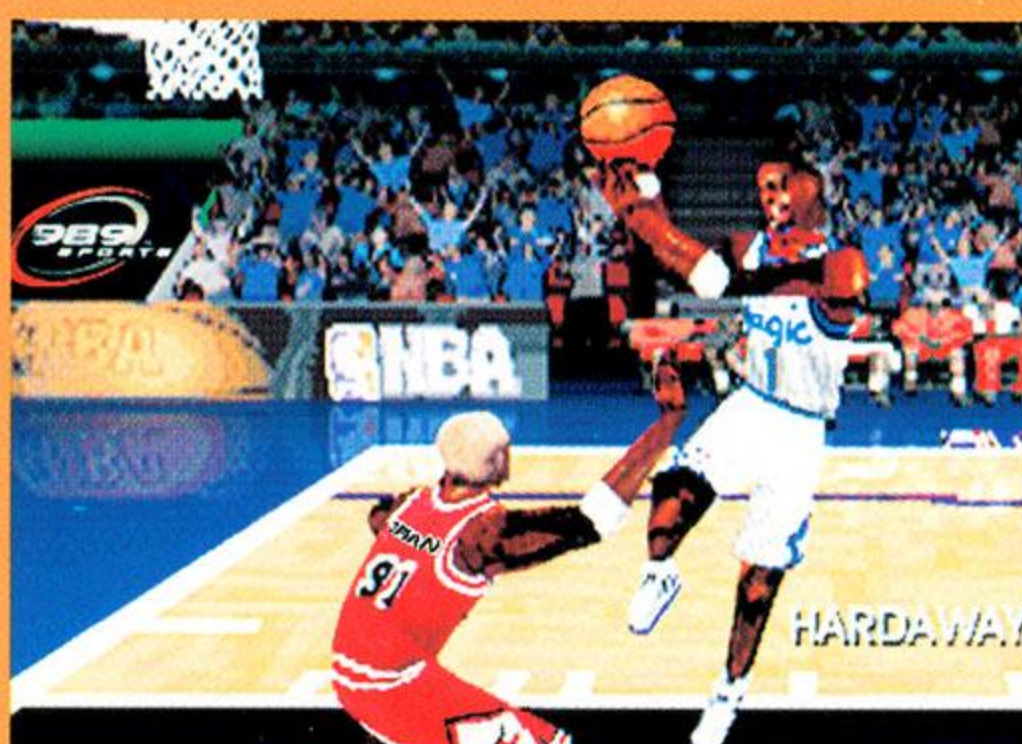
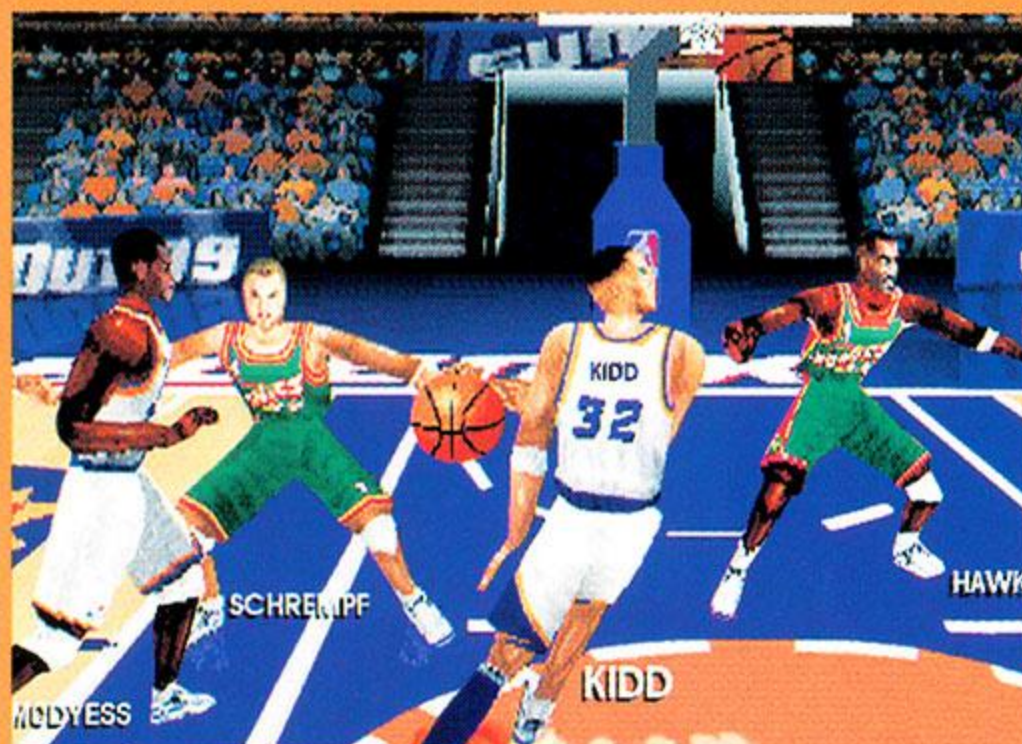
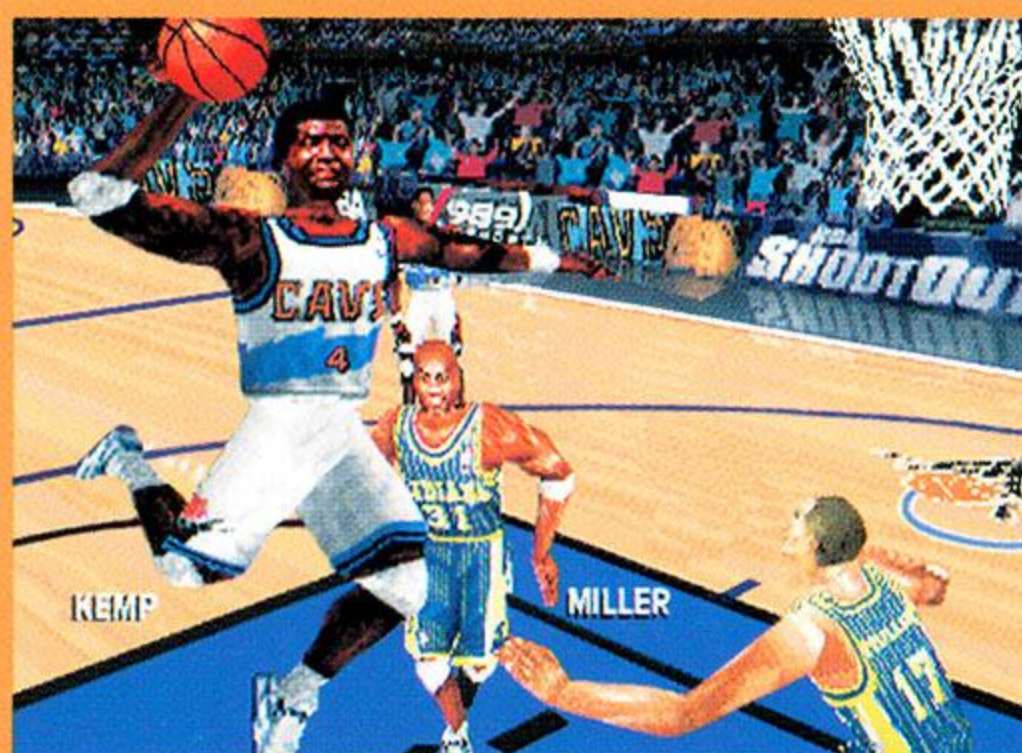


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SHAKE, BAKE, DRIVE,
HESITATE, PENETRATE, ELEVATE,
DOMINATE. (REPEAT.)

Welcome to NBA ShootOut '99. Where you don't just test other players' skills, you test their manhood. Are you ready to run the Bull's Triangle Offense? Can you shut down Utah's pick-and-roll? Got what it takes to bang the boards with the league's widebodies? This year, NBA ShootOut '99 returns to the court with all-new player and arena graphics, Authentic Basketball Intelligence™ that has players and teams running the floor just like they do in the NBA, Total Control Shooting™ for ultimate shot control, and play-by-play from NBA announcer Ian Eagle. NBA ShootOut '99. Find out what you're made of.

**NBA
SHOOTOUT
99**



www.989sports.com



PlayStation Gaming News



BEST SELLING PLAYSTATION TITLES RANKED ON UNIT SALES

SEPTEMBER 1998

**Konami's
Metal Gear Solid**



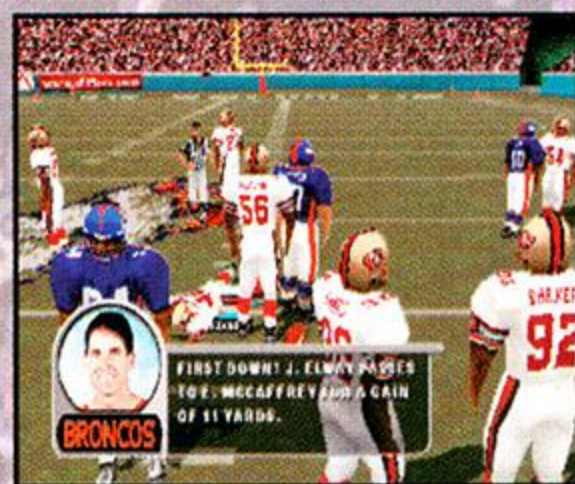
1

last month **

average retail price
\$49



**EA's
Madden NFL 99**



2

last month **1**

average retail price
\$41



**Midway's
NFL Blitz**



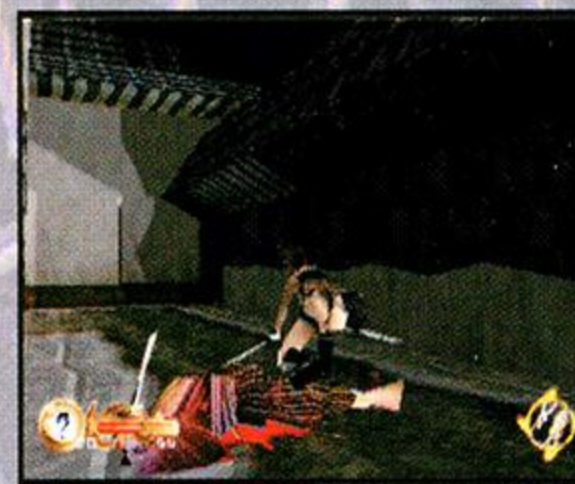
3

last month **6**

average retail price
\$43



**Activision's
Tenchu**



4

last month **

average retail price
\$43



**989 Studios'
NFL Gameday 99**



5

last month **2**

average retail price
\$40



**EA's
NASCAR 99**



6

last month **

average retail price
\$41



**THQ's
WWF WarZone**



7

last month **4**

average retail price
\$41



**Sony's
Parasite Eve**



8

last month **3**

average retail price
\$49



**Sony's
Crash Bandicoot 2**



9

last month **5**

average retail price
\$21



**Sony's
Spyro the Dragon**



10

last month **8**

average retail price
\$40



Source: NPD TRSTS Video Games Tracking Service
900 West Shore Road, Port Washington, NY 11050
(516) 625-2294

** Not in Top 10 Last Month

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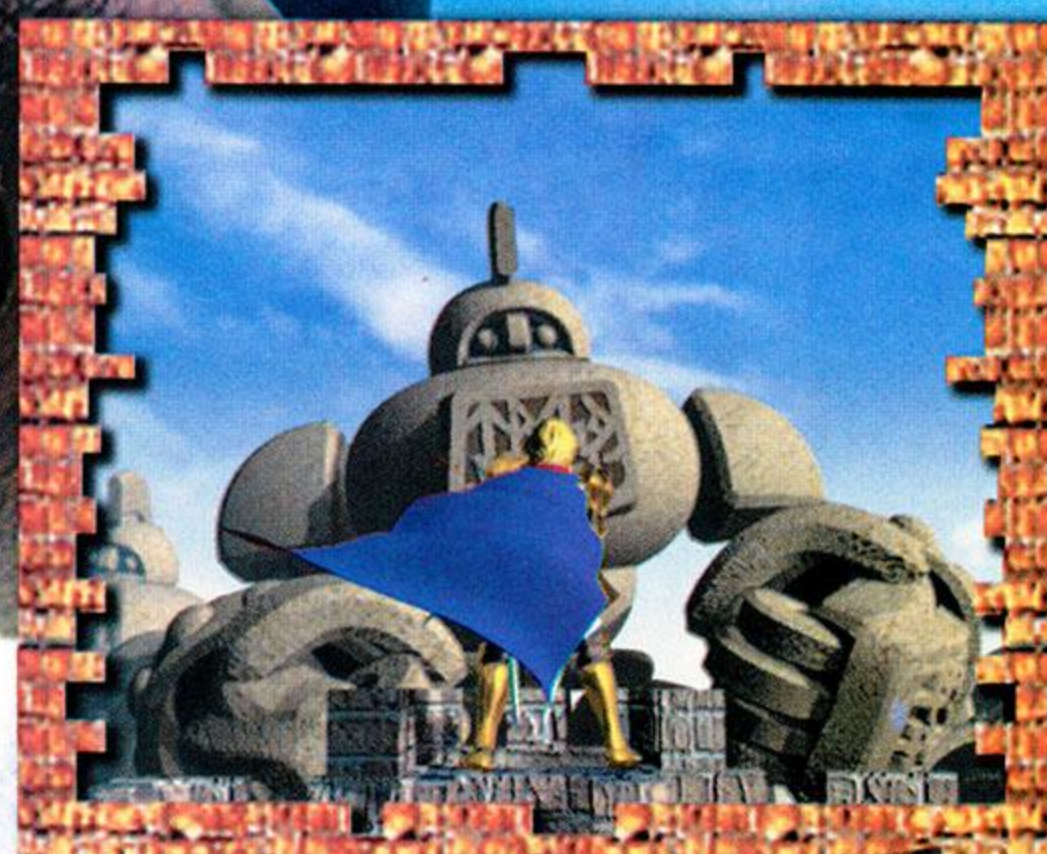
EX NEWS

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Kartia, Persona, Ogre Battle and Tactics Ogre.

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(It's a video game, too.)



The ultimate bug movie is
now the ultimate video game.

And Flik, the ant, needs your
help battling an army of pesky insects

through 15 stunning 3-D environments.

A Bug's Life video game is an



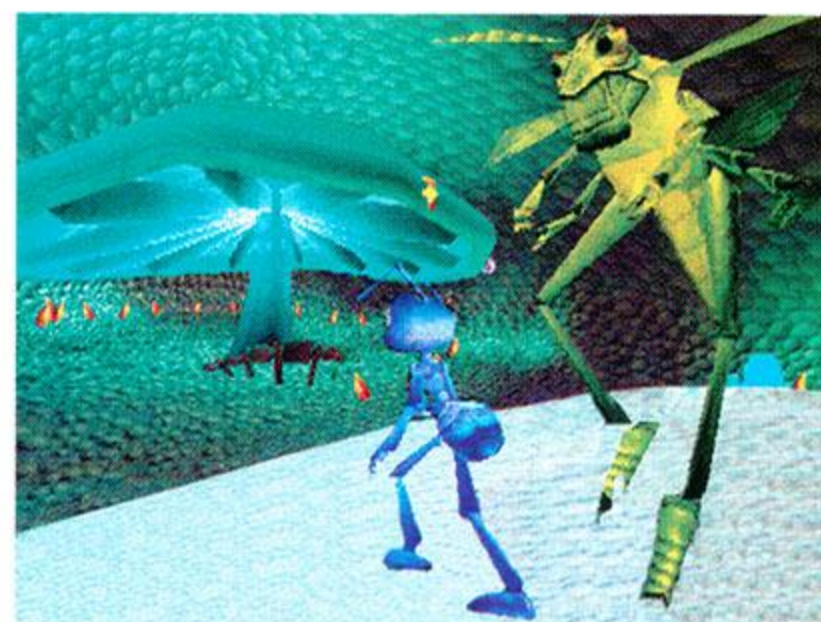
action-packed adventure that'll have

you swinging, flying and sliding in a world

seen through the eyes of an

ant. In other words, it's an

epic of miniature proportions.



www.playstation.com

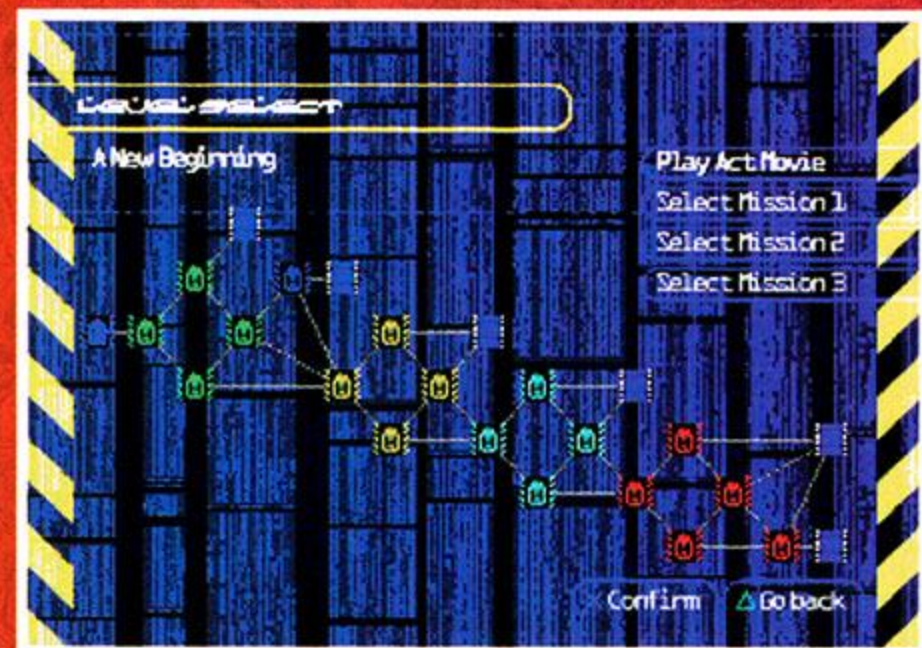
SEND US YOUR CODES AND WIN BIG PRIZES!

Each month we'll pick the best code sent in by our loyal and intelligent readers and send that person a brand spankin' new copy of ASCII's hot new point and click adventure game for the PlayStation, *Armored Core: Project Phantasma* or, if fighting's your thing, ASCII's *SpecializedStick* (you decide). But wait! That's not all: if you act now, we'll also include ASCII's super stylish ASCII Grip one-handed controller for the PlayStation, for your controlling pleasure, PLUS twelve (12) free issues of the best, the first, monthly dedicated PlayStation magazine, *PSExtreme*, of course! Whoa! That's a lot of cool stuff for just a code; what are you waiting for?

WE HAVE A WINNER!

Congratulations and thanks go to this month's winners, **Sean Davis of Flint, Michigan**. When the chips were down and we were all awaiting codes for *Colony Wars: Vengeance*, Sean was the man who came through. We didn't think they'd ever come. Thanks Sean!

Colony Wars: Vengeance



At the password section enter the codes exactly as they appear:

Stage Select: "Demon"
Infinite Energy: "Vampire"
Infinite Afterburner: "Avalanche"
Infinite Secondary Weapons: "Chimera"
99 Upgrade Weapons: "Hydra"
Super-cooled Weapons: "Dark*Angel"
All Weapons: "Tornado"
All Fighters: "Thunderchild"
All Cheats: "Blizzard"
Disable Cheats: "Stormlord"

CONTEST RULES: Anyone of any age can enter. The only people not eligible to win are employees of Dimension Publishing or ASCII Entertainment, their friends, family, pets and anyone they talk to or know of. Dimension Publishing reserves the right to make any and all decisions regarding the contest. One winner per month will be chosen, at Dimension Publishing's discretion, based on the code or trick supplied by the entrant. If you win but do not specify, in your code submission, which prize you want to receive (*Project Phantasma* or an ASCII *SpecializedStick*), then we will choose for you.

Metal Gear Solid



GHOST IMAGE LOCATIONS

Once you have aquired the camera in the game take pictures of each area below, then save the picture and look at it using the "Picture Album" option. A ghost image will appear in each photo.

Sato: Comm Tower A (roof destroyed by a Hind D missiles)

Nakamura: In Meryl's blood pool (where she is sniped)

Shinkawa: Deep in Sniper Wolfs hallway behind the second pillar

Shimizu: Wolf dog cave (first crawling point)

Kaneda: The mirror located in the Women's restroom

Fukushima: Heliport, looking out to sea from cliff

Takade: Ninja room, glass at edge

Fujimura: Elevator, in the Comm Tower B complex

Hirano: Elevator (Comm Tower B) deep in the shaft of top level

Muraoka: Water in cargo dock

Ishiyama: Heliport top of building

Uehara: Edge of elevator (the one were the ravens are)

Negishi: Sewage waterfall

Mizutani: When fighting Metal Gear

Korekado: Men's restroom

Sasaki: Picture frames in the Commanders room

Sonoyama: Torture machine

Toyota: Container in the middle of Raven's warehouse

Kozyou: Behind the watertank-like structure in the Canyon

Kojima: Otacon lab (the picture frame to the right)

Matsuhana: Hallway of corpses (outside Otacons lab)

Shikama: Electic floor

Kimura: MG underground base, tip of of Metal Gear railgun

Kobayashi: Rock in canyon

Okajima: Maggots of the real DARPA Chief in cell

Nishimura: Next to Baker's corpse

Mukaide: Reflection in wolfdog cave puddle

Onoda: Where Baker is tied up

Kitao: Decoy Octopus (fake DARPA chief) corpse

Yoshimura: Dead end of air duct

Ito: Inside elevator to tank hangar

Jerem Blaustein: Sniper Wolfs corpse

Yoshioka: Bridge on the third floor of the the blast furnace

Mori: Lowest point of elevator (Comm Tower B)

Kinbara: Dark area of stairs

Tougo: End of boiler room (in Blast Furnace where the steam is)

Makimura: Hidden armory store room behind the wall

Kutome: Observation room

Tanaka: Heliport, sleeping soldier

Shigeno: Heliport, security camera by staircase

Yamashita: Tip of nuke warhead in nuke storage room

Kobayashi: Johnny Sasaki holding cell, near DARPA chief

Scott Dolph: Way down in the dark from the walkway between Comm Tower A and B

WATCH MERYL WORKOUT

When crawling along the duct above the holding cells, you may look down to see Meryl in her cell exercising. Leave the duct immediately by going down the ladder, now re-enter the area again. Each time you repeat the step above Meryl will be doing new moves, a few are posted below.

1) Sit ups

2) One arm push up

3) Stretches

4) Sit ups in underwear

5) One arm push ups in underwear

PANTLESS MERYL

Follow Meryl into the Women's bathroom and reach the last stall in under five seconds. Then, Meryl will be caught with her pants down during the next FMV sequence.

Code submitted by Ben -Darkvine- Klemm

S.C.A.R.S.



PASSWORDS

GLASSX: Crystal grand prix

DESERT: Crystal grand prix+car 6 (Scorpion)

ROCKYY: Crystal + Diamond grand prix

RATTLE: Crystal + Diamond grand prix + cars 6 & 7 (scorpion & Cobra)

ZDPEAK: All the grand prix

XPRTS: All the grand prix + Mirror mode

RUNNER: All the grand prix + Mirror mode + car 8 (Guepard)

MYSTER: All the grand prix + Mirror mode + car 9 (Panthere)

ALLVID: All the grand prix + Mirror mode + all the cars

Code submitted by Matt Kutza



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at SEARS

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NBA SHOOTOUT '99



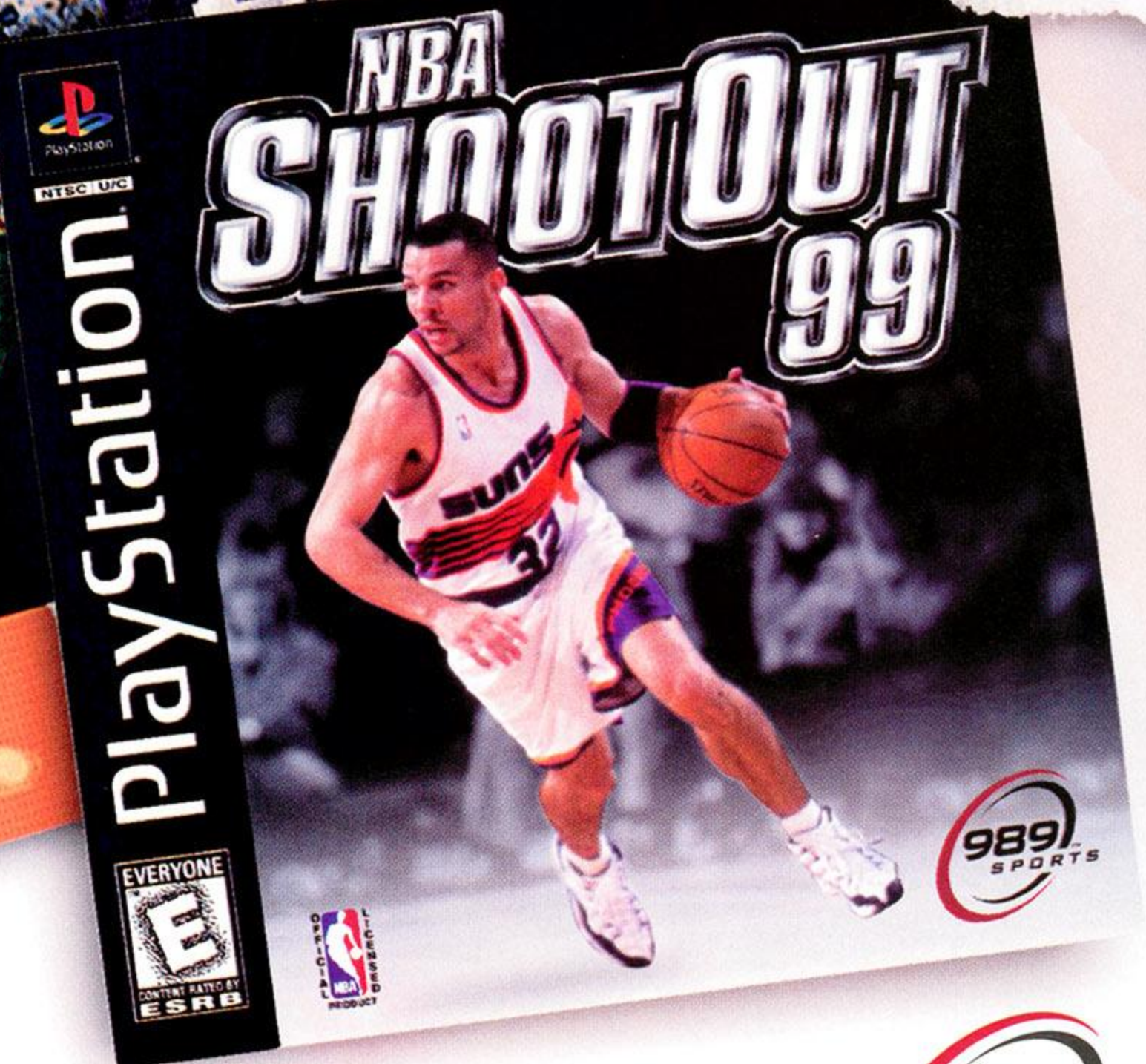
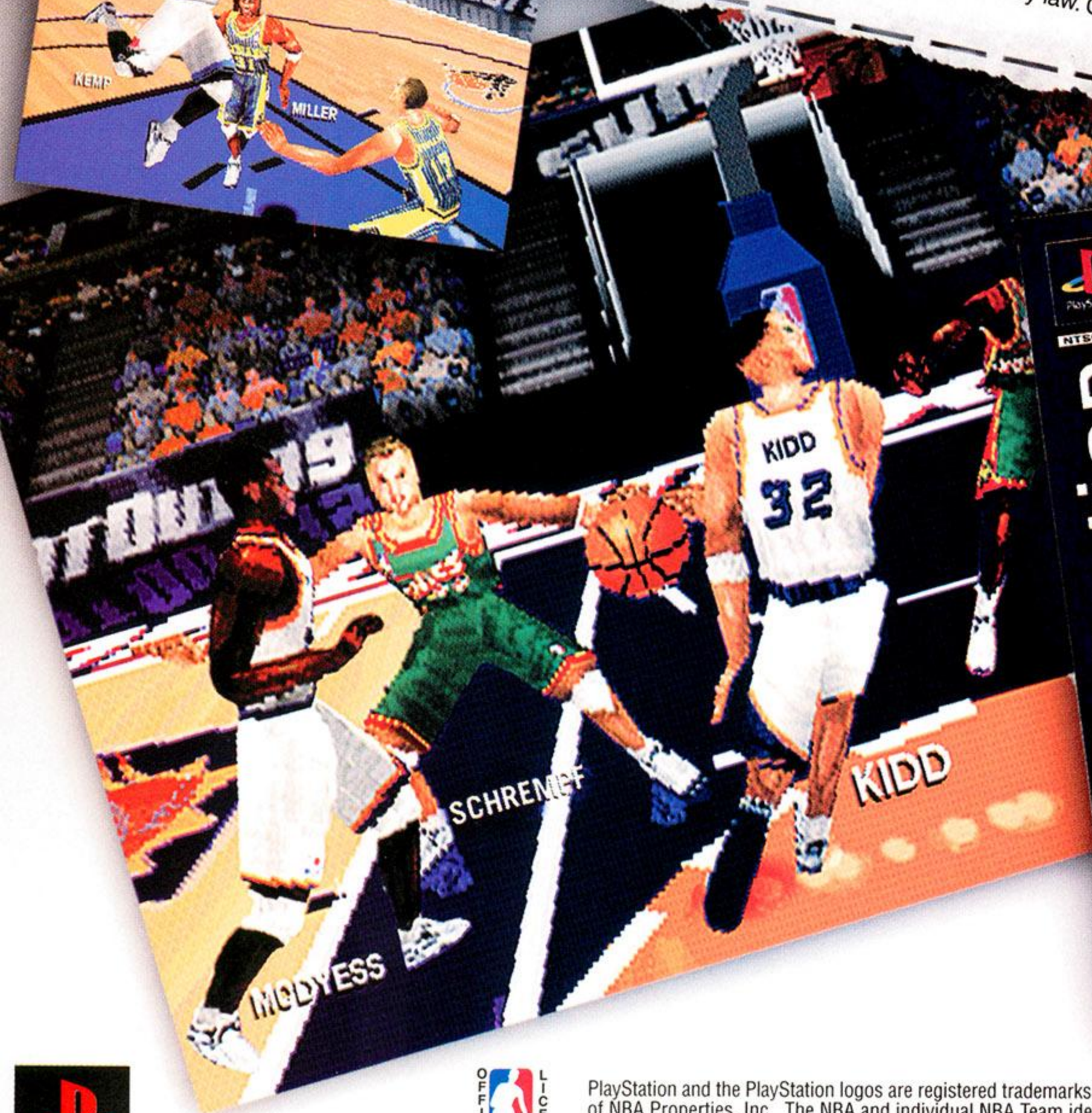
SEARS FUNTRONICS



R 5 7 7 2 7 8 0 7 0 3 \$ 5 0 0

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An extreme racing experience that takes you into the future of speed, and leaves all other racing games behind.

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Windows® 95
PC CD-ROM



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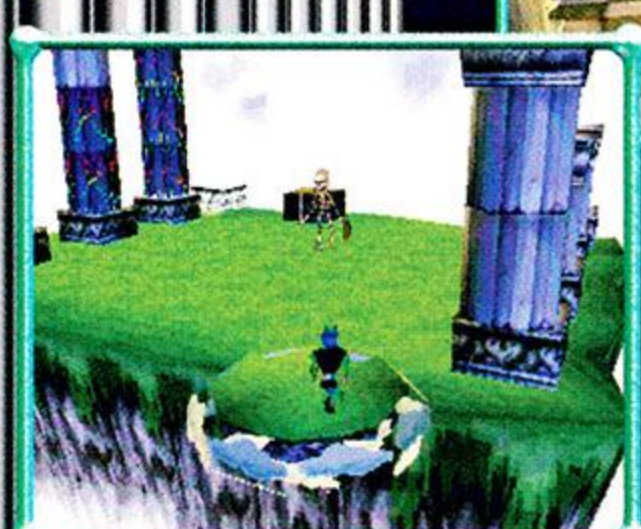
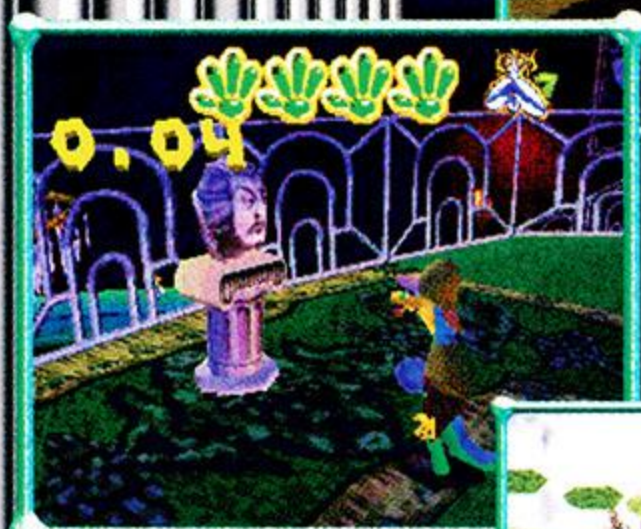
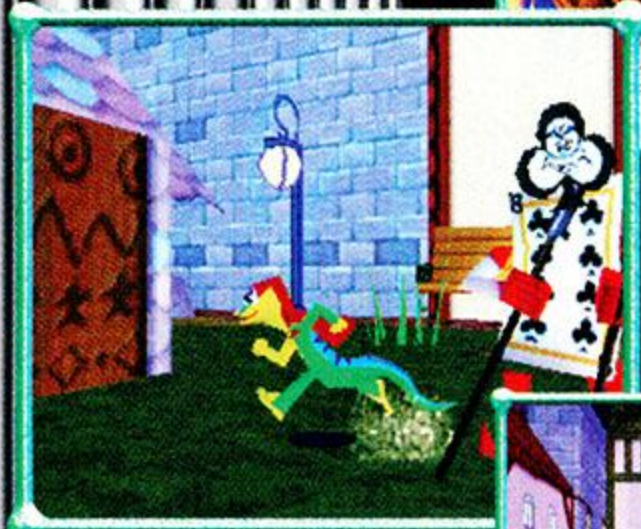


www.jeffgordonxsracing.com



RACING™

GEX3



Crystal Dynamics is hard at work on the third installment in the GEX series and we turn our EXclusive attention this month to everyone's favorite gecko. We have spent some time with a semi-playable version of the game and can tell you that GEX fans are going to be in for a real treat. As was the case in GEX: Enter the Gecko, the two stars of the show are GEX himself, and the different looks and characterizations that he takes on, and the themed levels. This time around, GEX travels through an old west ghost town, on a pirate ship, through ancient mythological worlds, into the heart (and rooftops) of the big city, to different cartoon fantasy worlds and much, much more. In addition, GEX takes on a number of new roles. In the different levels, he becomes Roman GEX, south of the border GEX, Pharaoh GEX, army man GEX, detective GEX, little red riding GEX, etc. The design team is still fleshing out what additional personalities GEX will take on. We have seen a few of the potentials and they are intriguing as well.

Gameplay-wise, GEX will now be able to ride a snowboard, a burro, a sea turtle and other alternative modes of transportation. There also seems to be a greater emphasis being placed on discovering switches to secret areas. Technologically, the new GEX looks to take advantage of all of the ground-breaking hi-techness found in Enter the Gecko, as well as advancements that have been made to the engine in the development of Crystal's other high-profile titles; Akuji the Heartless and Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver (Hey! Does anyone out there know what a "Reaver" is?... and, more importantly, can it help me make it through the night?). There are all-new water effects and other texture improvements that include, among other things, a really cool, glossy floor with deep reflections (in one of the big city levels). Obviously, there is much more of a story to tell, and we will have it for you as the game gets closer to completion and becomes more playable. GEX: Enter the Gecko was one of our favorite games of 1998, and we are looking for more great things in '99 — stay tuned!



DAVE

EXCLUSIVE



PSYCHO PeNGUINS



cRushers and wOrmholes

(All the reasons you love to ride)



Psybadek

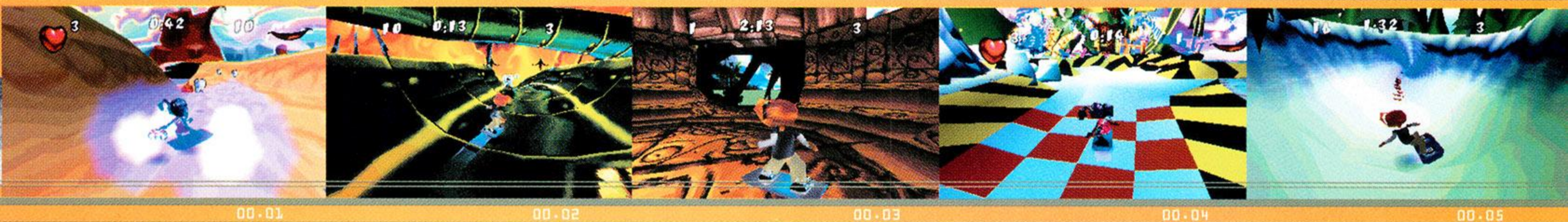
www.psygnosis.com



There are burly, uncharted riding environments out there and the only way you can get there is jump on a hoverdek and follow **Mia and Xako**.

Are you ready for **50 levels, five zones** (including desert, jungle and an underworld), psycho-penguins, crushers, bosses, wormholes and teleports?

If you're good, you can learn new tricks to access secret areas. If you're really good, someone might even pay homage to your skills with a righteous tattoo.





BACON
FOR BREAK



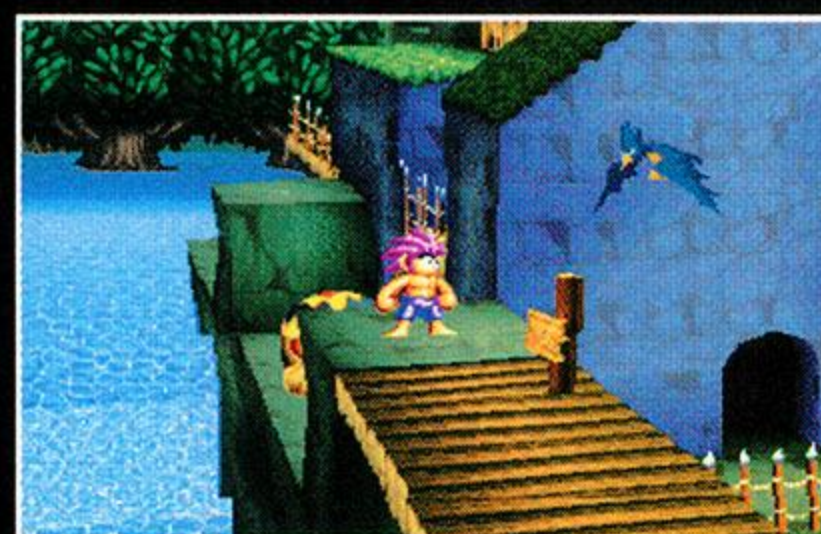
WhoopeeCamp™

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ISN'T JUST
FAST ANYMORE.



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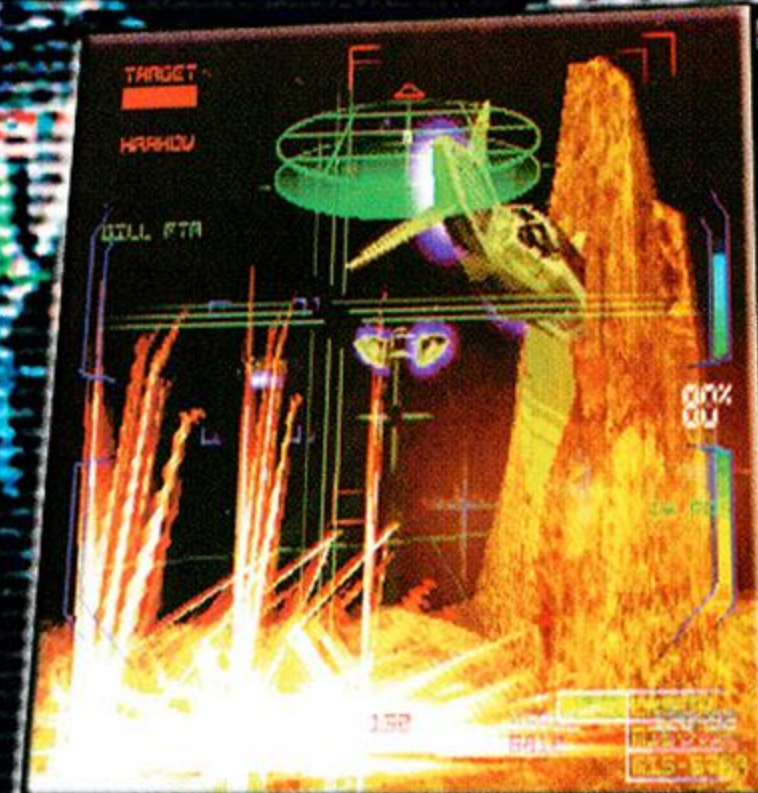
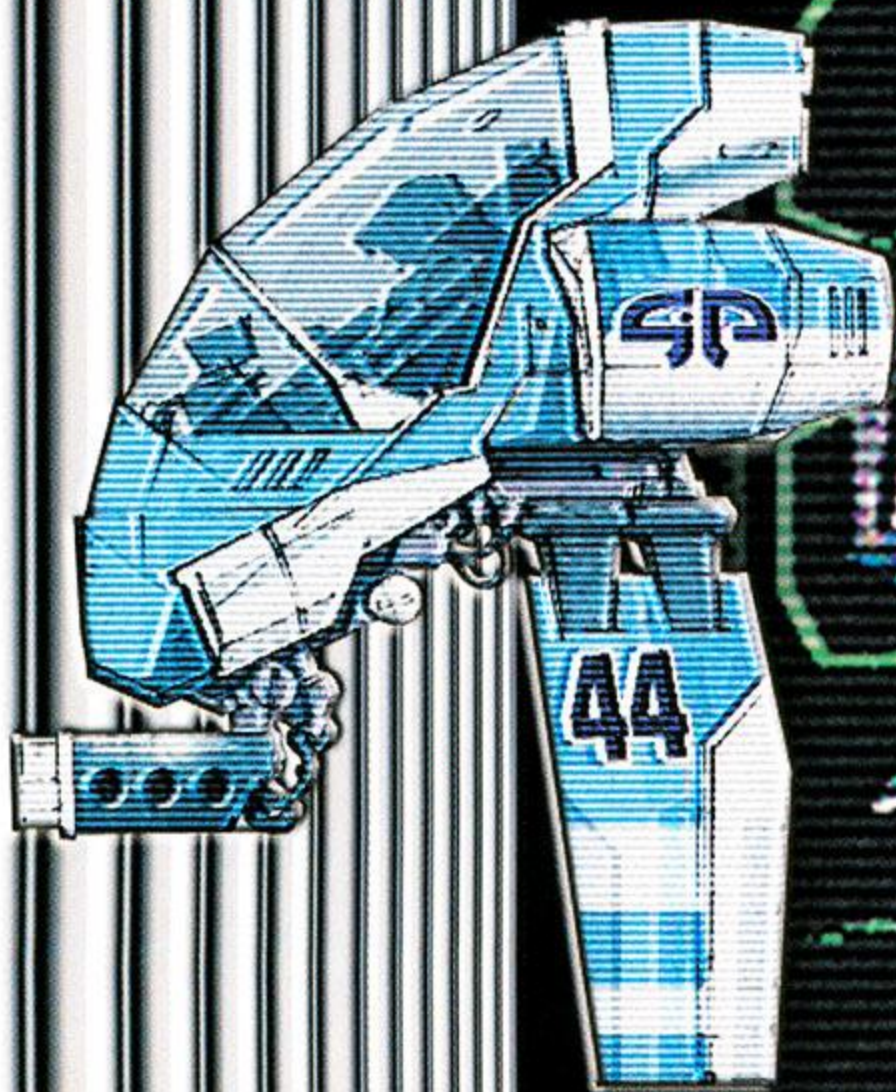


Evil pigs. Hidden paths. Enchanting worlds. And man-eating plants. Can you believe what Tomba™ has to go through to conquer the evil swine? Fortunately, he's got a bunch of weapons and tons of spunk. Tomba's here. And it's the first wild action game with role-playing adventure mixed in, too. (You'll love Tomba even more than a BLT on rye.)



www.playstation.com

G POLICE WEAPONS OF JUSTICE



Psygnosis' original G Police was released last year with not much fanfare, especially at retail. Personally, I felt it was a great game, albeit a little too hard due to a seriously steep learning curve and uneven difficulty throughout the game's levels, but still a great game nonetheless (it received a Gold rating of 93% in our November '97 issue, Vol. 2, Iss. 12). Not to be dissuaded, the developers at Wheelhaus went back to the drawing board and have created a new and much more refined experience, taking the game to the next level. Titled "G Police Weapons of Justice", the sequel picks up just ten days after the first, continuing the struggle between the Nanosoft resistance and the G Police.

As a young recruit, you'll have more than just a standard HAVOC gunship at your disposal. Added to GP2 are three new vehicles to experience: the Rhino, Corsair and Raptor, which allow you to fight not only in the air, but in space and on land as well. Some of the other major differences, from this version to the last, include: a much easier control method in which to come to grips; improved graphic and physics engines that push the PS's hardware to its limits; new AI routines which give enemies and wingmen the ability to react intelligently to your abilities; and a host of new weapons and enemy ships. G Police Weapons of Justice will be shipping in March of next year.

greg

EXCLUSIVE

LONG AGO, A SMALL COUNTRY WAS BESTOWED MYSTICAL OBJECTS POSSESSING MYSTICAL POWERS. BUT THESE OBJECTS, RELICS, WERE MUCH TOO POWERFUL. EVENTUALLY, THE EMPIRE DESTROYED ITSELF, SEALING ITS SECRET FOR ETERNITY. 1000 YEARS LATER, ONE MAN HAS UNLEASHED THE POWER AND ONCE AGAIN, THE CONTINENT FACES TOTAL DESTRUCTION. PIT RELIC AGAINST RELIC AS 12 INDIVIDUALS FIGHT FOR PEACE, POWER, GREED AND PROSPERITY. OBJECTS OF POWER FAIL, BUT THE SCARS REMAIN...



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CREATORS OF
DYNASTY WARRIORS...

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Spotlight on:

EIDOS

I N T E R A C T I V E

Eidos Interactive has come a long way since the merger of Domark and US Gold a few years back. With the launch of the original Tomb Raider, Eidos went from obscurity to almost a household name, and within their first few years of business, they were able to amass a group of talented developers and become one of the industry's leading publishing houses. With Core Design, Mucky Foot, Kronos, Tygon, Quantic Dreams, Pumpkin Studios and the newly assimilated Crystal Dynamics, Eidos is primed, pumped and ready to show the world that there is more to them than just Lara Croft. Next year Eidos will release several original titles that gamers will surely need for their PlayStation. Included with their roster of 1999 PC releases are Warzone 2100, Legacy of Kain, Gex 3, Saboteur, Omikron, Vermin, and Urban Chaos.



OMIKRON *The Nomad Soul*

From French developer Quantic Dreams comes Omikron, a futuristic adventure set in the largest 3D environment ever created on the PlayStation. Set in a gritty Blade Runner-like atmosphere,

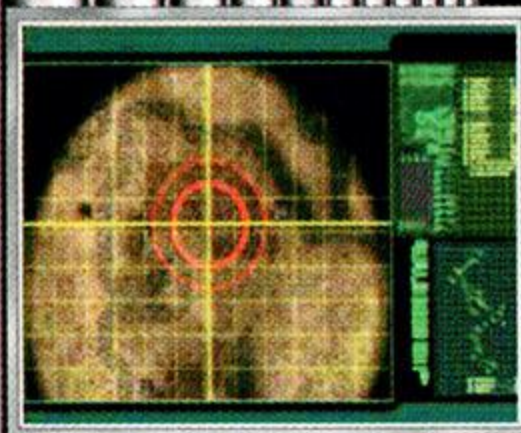
Omikron places you in the role of a cop looking to solve a streak of mysterious murders. The game is played out in a go-anywhere, real-time 3D engine and shows off some impressive graphic effects. One of the most unique features of the game is the ability to experience "virtual reincarnation." When your character dies, whoever he has come in contact with last will be the character you play next — same objective, different body. When this happens, you automatically lose all your skills and abilities from your last body, but gain new ones as well. This could be good or bad depending on whom you touch last. Omikron is currently scheduled for release early next year.



WARZONE 2100

UK-based developer Pumpkin Studios is currently putting the final touches on Warzone 2100. Mixing intense combat action with detailed real-time strategy, Warzone should help expand the category that Command &

Conquer pretty much owns. Offering up a bit more than just setting up your troops then sending them out to fight, the game mixes detailed resource management with hands-on action. Set in the 21st century, the game drop-kicks the player into the tail-end of a post-apocalyptic war, where the prize is acquiring Earth's lost technologies. One of the most notable features of the game, which sets it above others in its genre, is that you can build your own vehicles, weapons and droids. Everytime you discover a new weapon or armor, you can equip your armada with it and then rebuild others with the leftover scrap. At this point, the game is looking pretty good, with a 3D, rotatable landscape that allows you to view everything that is going on around you at all times. There are three huge campaigns in which to engage the enemy and enormous worlds to explore, exploit and conquer.



URBAN CHAOS

There's not too much to talk about regarding Urban Chaos at this point. The game is still early in its development cycle and there's not much implemented in the way of gameplay. The game is played out via a sharp-looking 3D engine where you take on the mean streets of a 3D city, brawling your way through one area to the next. Look for plenty of third-person perspective action and nice, detailed graphic touches, such as swirling leaves that kick up from your character's shoes and brilliant lighting effects. Look for Urban Chaos sometime in the second quarter of next year.



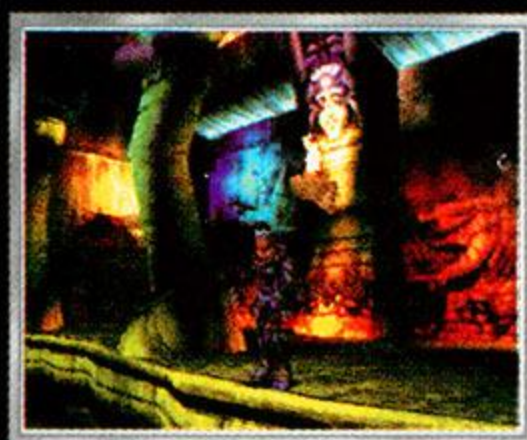
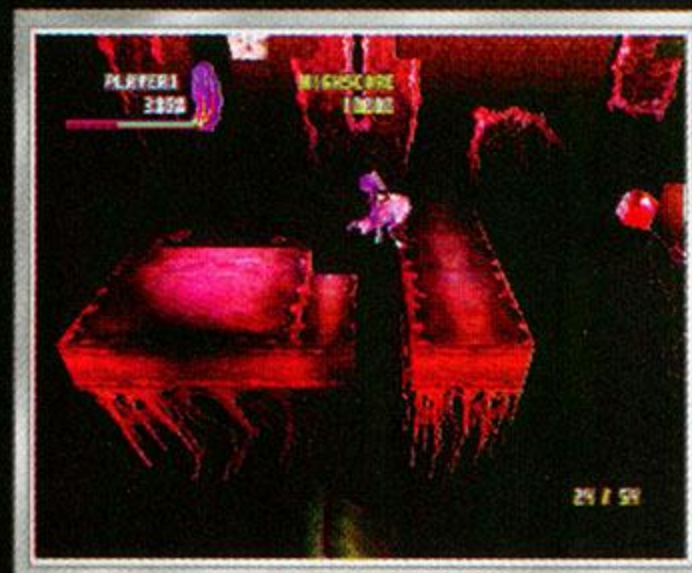
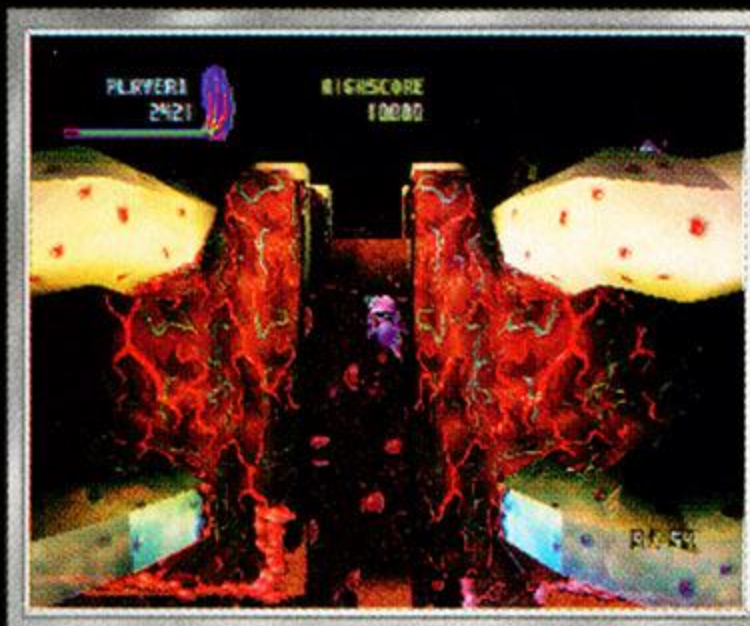
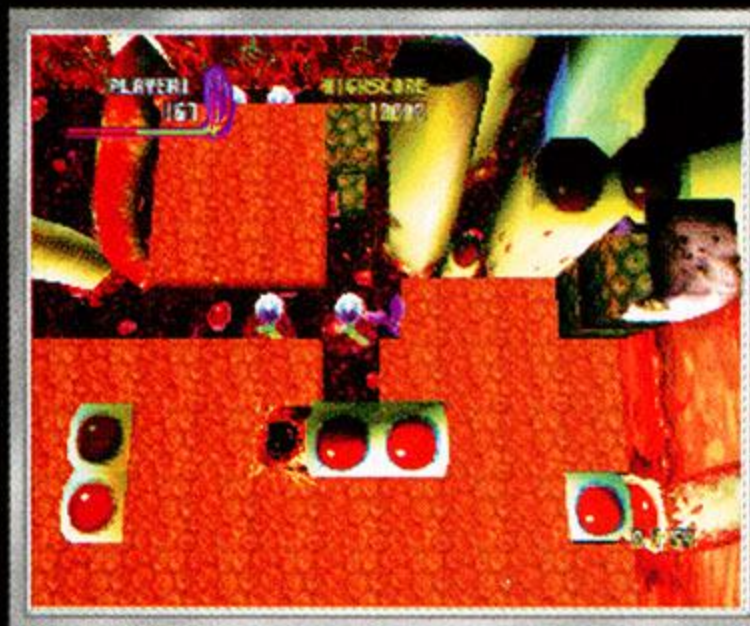
EXCLUSIVE



Kronos, the developers of such 3D fighting games as *Dark Rift* and *Cardinal Syn*, have deviated from the fighting arena and created a unique, 3D arcade style game by the name of *Vermin* that shares similar gameplay elements with Namco's classic coin-op, *Dig Dug*. *Vermin*, like the title implies, puts you in the role of one of two nasty little parasites who have taken on the task of burrowing their way through a human body.

Each level has you feasting on some part of the human anatomy, looking for specifically tasty infected areas such as gangrene and puss, while avoiding or killing strange amoebas, white blood cells and the like. As in *Dig Dug*, you can use environmental objects to crush your

opponents, as well as shoot them until they explode with your own toxic gas. Unlike the old classic, the levels are completely 3D, allowing you to climb up and down certain areas while the screen rotates around you. *Vermin* is looking to gross out gamers sometime early next year.



Legacy of Kain Soul Reaver

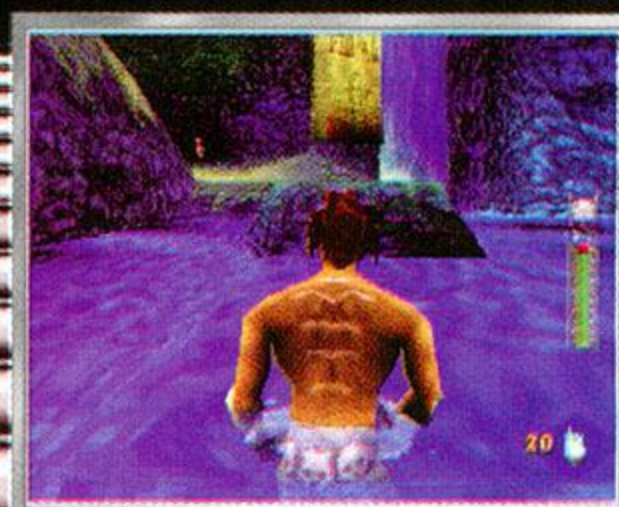
game play mechanics. Raziel, the protagonist of the game, can do an amazing amount of moves, from running, walking, jumping, ducking, swimming, climbing, gliding and hand-to-hand combat, to wielding spears with which he can throw or impale enemies and the ability to push, pull and knock over environmental objects. It's also possible to shift between spectral and material realms, which will become a necessity in order to solve the game's numerous puzzles. The amount of care and detail that has already gone into this game is extremely evident and *Legacy of Kain* will certainly be one of '99's more memorable titles.

While we've shown *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver* more than a few times in the pages of our magazine, the game's potential is so huge that we have no qualms about showing it off again. In addition to being a graphical masterpiece, *Soul Reaver* promises to come packed with a host of great



AKUJI THE HEARTLESS

Dave has played through the first four levels of the game — with the lights turned off in his office. This is a good sign... he only dims the lights for the best of the best... we'll see next month!





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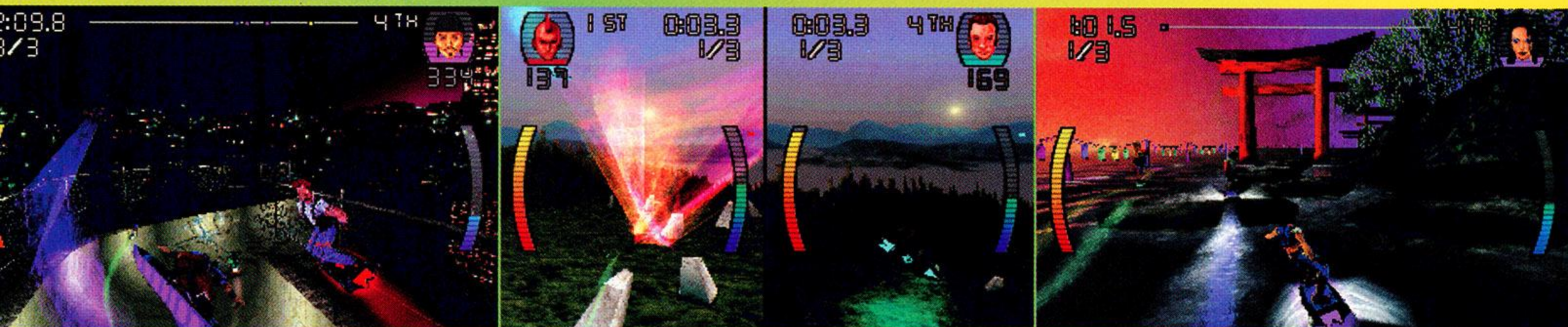
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R4TM

RIDGE RACER TYPE 4



Name some of the biggest titles to come out for the PlayStation throughout its three year history and you'll find that a good portion of them come from Namco. In fact, the Tekken and Ridge Racer series are responsible for helping sell the hardware early on, drawing gamers in with their arcade-perfect graphics and tight gameplay.

Here we are, at the cusp of 1998 and '99, and PlayStation owners are about to be treated to yet another technical racing achievement from the company that obviously knows the capabilities of the PlayStation intimately. R4, the title for Namco's newest racing game, is the logical next step for the Ridge Racer series. Showing off a variety of new specifications and features, while retaining the overall flavor and driving sensation of the ones before, R4 has the potential to catch up, and possibly overtake the reigning king of driving games, SCEA's Gran Turismo.

Each successive Ridge Racer title, from Revolution to Ridge Racer, has broken new ground, taking the series in a little bit different direction from the last. Ridge Racer Revolution added more graphic features, such as lens flares, less pop-up, more cars to obtain and a handy rear-view mirror. Ridge Racer, was, in general, a whole new beast. Having a new and improved graphic engine and the ability to purchase new cars added a ton of replayability and gave gamers a reason to race on the same four sections of tracks over and over. With R4, Namco has once again upped the ante, by throwing in a host of new features and bonuses that will surely make it a memorable experience. To start, the one track with extended sections (which has been the norm for the series from the get go) has been replaced with a total of eight. With most current racing games featuring well over five or six unique tracks, Namco knew they had to create a large variety to stay competitive. In addition, they've gone back in and re-tooled the graphic engine once again, steering away from the vibrantly colorful graphics of the original and replacing them with a gritty real-world look. To compliment this, they've added impressive lighting effects,



EXCLUSIVE

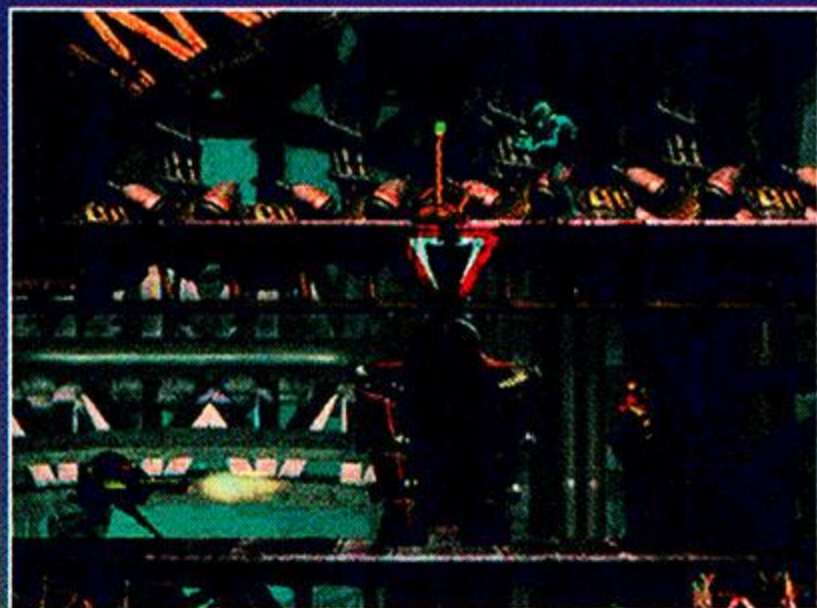


motion blurring and stunning back-grounds. R4 will also feature more than 300 kinds of playable cars (including different color options), a new two-player split screen mode (a first for the series) as well as the return of the link-up option via the link cable (where a total of four players can race at the same time by both selecting the two-player competitive modes). Another addition is a new Gran Prix Mode, where the player will get to experience the life of a freelance racing driver. In this mode, players will pick a team and type of car with which to race, then move through the ranks in an effort to become the grand champion. Whether or not you earn new cars is dependant on your records and the condition of your team. Your driving skills become the deciding factor on your ultimate success.

As usual, Namco has added lots of goodies and bonuses that go way beyond the typical video game. For starters, R4 will be compatible with Sony's upcoming PocketStation. While details are a bit sketchy, we're told players will be able to download and trade cars acquired in the game's Gran Prix Mode with others via the infra-red function. Then there's the Jogcon, a new controller that Namco is producing which sports a "jog dial" fixed in its center. This part will rotate like a steering wheel using your thumb and electricity, adding pin-point feedback and accuracy (there is no official word whether or not the Jogcon will be released in the States, but it's most likely since the game does not utilize the analog sticks on the Dual Shock). Lastly, R4 will contain a bonus CD with a 60 frames-per-second version of the original Ridge Racer packed in with the game. Take all of these features and combine them with the series' award-winning gameplay, and you have another potentially huge hit on the roster for early next year. Currently, R4 is scheduled to ship in Japan this December. There is no official US release date, but it shouldn't be too far behind.

GREG





**Flesh-eating Fleeches! Undead
Mudombies! Bone-grinding Greeters!**



**Tons of cool new power-ups!
Invisibility! Healing powers! And more!**



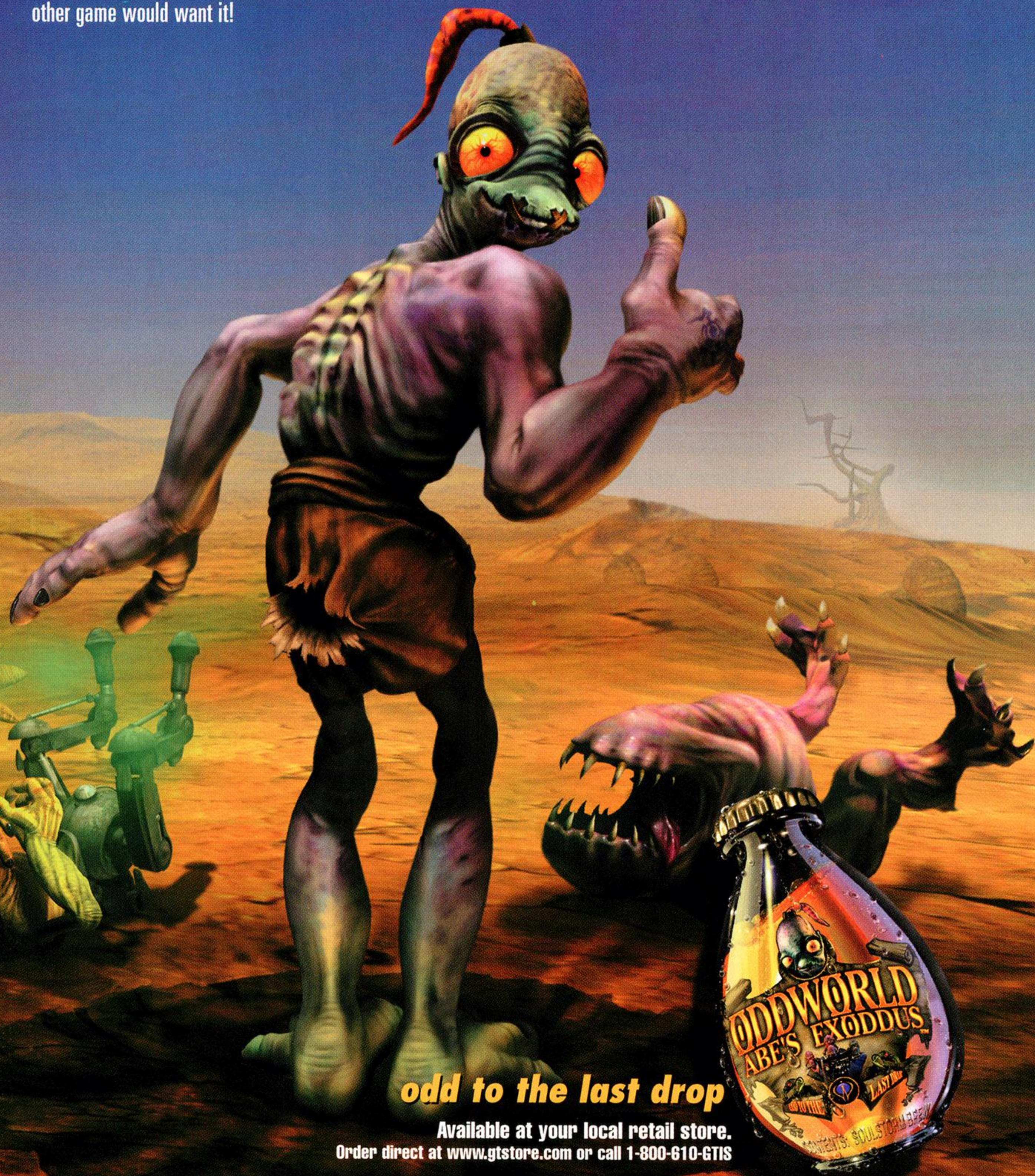
**Abe gets all emotional! More panic!
More talking! More pleading!**



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odd to the last drop

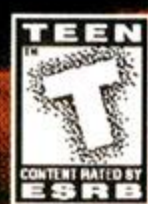
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The 1998

EXTREME

Awards

FOR EXCELLENCE IN GAMING

1998 will be remembered as the year that Sony took control of the video game industry. While Sega fell off of the map completely, Nintendo had troubles in Japan. In fact, if it wasn't for some limited success in North America, they too would probably be playing the new hardware game. But, PlayStation owners don't need a new box, we've simply got the best gaming system that money can buy. One look at the category winners spread over the next few pages is testimony to this fact. We feel that the winners this year show a great variety of game-play experiences and graphic looks and environments. The selection was so tough this year that perennial winners like the Tomb Raider series lost out in close races. Of course, as PlayStation consumers, all we did was win! The best hardware, the best (and cheapest!) software make for the dominant market player. Our congratulations go to SCEA and all of the winners herein. Here's looking forward to more good, clean fun in 1999!

GAME OF THE YEAR



- 1 METAL GEAR SOLID
- 2 MEDIEVIL
- 3 CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED

BEST DRIVING GAME OF THE YEAR:



- 1 GRAN TURISMO
- 2 TEST DRIVE 5
- 3 NEED FOR SPEED III

BEST PUZZLE GAME OF THE YEAR:



- 1 ROLLAWAY
- 2 BUST A MOVE 4
- 3 DEVIL DICE

BEST ACTION/PLATFORM GAME OF THE YEAR:



- 1 CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED
- 2 MEDIEVIL
- 3 GEX: ENTER THE GECKO

**BEST STRATEGY GAME
OF THE YEAR:**



- 1 **KAGERO: DECEPTION II**
- 2 TRAP GUNNER
- 3 COMMAND & CONQUER: RETALIATION

**BEST ROLE PLAYING GAME
OF THE YEAR:**



- 1 **GRANSTREAM SAGA**
- 2 XENOGears
- 3 BRAVE FENCER MUSASHI

**BEST FIGHTING GAME
OF THE YEAR:**



- 1 **TEKKEN 3**
- 2 GUILTY GEAR
- 3 X-MEN VS. STREET FIGHTER EX

**BEST GAME MUSIC
OF THE YEAR:**



- 1 **MEDIEVIL**
- 2 VIGILANTE 8
- 3 SPYRO THE DRAGON

**BEST GAME GRAPHICS
OF THE YEAR:**



- 1 **SPYRO THE DRAGON**
- 2 CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED
- 3 MEDIEVIL

**BEST ACTION/SHOOTER
GAME OF THE YEAR:**



- 1 **ROGUE TRIP**
- 2 VIGILANTE 8
- 3 REBOOT

**BEST SHOOTER GAME
OF THE YEAR:**



- 1 **COLONY WARS: VENGEANCE**
- 2 EINHANDER
- 3 FORSAKEN

**BEST EXPLORATION/ADVENTURE
GAME OF THE YEAR:**



- 1 **METAL GEAR SOLID**
- 2 TOMB RAIDER III
- 3 DUKE NUKEM: TIME TO KILL

**BEST SPORTS GAME
OF THE YEAR:**



- 1 **HOT SHOTS GOLF**
- 2 NFL BLITZ
- 3 NFL GAMEDAY 99

The Editors' Year In Review

DAVE'S YEAR-END SUMMARY

For me, 1998 will be remembered as the PlayStation's "Year of the Action/Platform Game." For those of you that religiously read PSExtreme, you know I have two video game passions; sports games and A/P's. While the year provided very little that was new, exciting or innovative in the world of sports, the Action/Platform genre had it in spades. In fact, there was so much good stuff that picking just one or two to play is next to impossible. Look at this list; GEX: Enter the Gecko, Crash Bandicoot: Warped, Medievil, A Bug's Life, Jersey Devil and Blasto... not to mention decent games that just missed the mark, like Rascal. In addition to all of the butt-bouncing that I did in 1998, I also found time to tackle a number of the big name games, such as; Metal Gear Solid, Tenchu, Test Drive 5, Need for Speed 3, Gran Turismo, Duke Nukem: Time To Kill and Tomb Raider 3. I think the biggest surprise of the year was Sony's Medievil — the quality of the entire package; gameplay, graphics and music, is up with the best on the platform. Now, for what I would like to see in 1999 — listed in no particular order; the video game press stop talking about Sega's Dreamcast — they are launching it like they did the Saturn and it will fail in the same manner, a baseball game where you can hit the ball into the parking lot (and actually see it!), a basketball game featuring new, unique play mechanics, Medievil 2, Crash 4 on PS2000, Tomorrow Never Dies ship, EA do a new, innovative product, instead of all the products that end in a date, Soul Reaver to live up to expectations and that SCEA release Jumping Flash 3 in the US.

CHRIS' YEAR-END SUMMARY

In my mind, '98 was really the break-out year for the PlayStation. With somewhere in the neighborhood of 18 million units parked in homes and offices across the globe, the PlayStation has finally reached the point where even the most confused parents no longer refer to it as the "Nintendo Station." And if the last four months of '98 are any indication, the PSX is gearing up to reach an even broader number of players, even as we begin to hear murmurs of Sony's Next Big Thing.

The software situation was totally out of control, but the number of gems far outweighed the number of clunkers. There were a number of truly great games released this year: Metal Gear Solid, Resident Evil 2, Bust A Groove, Tomb Raider 3, Tomba... All in all, it's been another bang up year to be a gamer, young or old.

I've really enjoyed the way the system has matured into a full-featured platform. There are games for any and every taste, be it mature horror fans, racers, kiddies, fighters, sports nuts. If you look at the two narrow markets that Nintendo is currently chasing — mostly kids and some hardcore gamers — you can see why that system just isn't taking off. The PlayStation, on the other hand, has become an all-around gaming machine, with an offering to match any taste. And Sony isn't trying to push stupid virtual pets on us, either.

Most of all, I love the way that PlayStation games continue to surprise me. While some people mindlessly blather on about the PSX being "maxed out," I enjoy sitting down with a game and finding that the developers have done something special in terms of gameplay or design. There's still a lot to be done with the system as it stands and I'm ready to invest time in any game that promises an enjoyable experience. Bring on '99, I'm ready.

ALEX'S YEAR-END SUMMARY

Once again, it's the one time every year where I'm let off my leash and allowed to editorialize about the industry and year as a whole. Like many of my fellow edi-

tors, the first thing that pops into my pea brain is the absolute abundance of quality titles that appeared on the PlayStation in 1998. Metal Gear, Gran Turismo, Spyro, NFL Blitz, Tekken 3, Tomb Raider 3, CB 3, GEX: ETG, Test Drive 5, Hot Shots Golf, are all outstanding and seem to be testing the outer limits of the power in this little gray box. Which, of course, leads me to my main point about the current state of the PlayStation market. There has been a lot of buzz about Sega's Dreamcast and what impact it might have on the PlayStation. Let me just say that the answer to that question is "none!" Yes, big names like Capcom and Konami have announced their intention to publish for this system, but why shouldn't they? The N64 is still far too expensive for developers and the system hasn't proven the ability to maintain its main demographic segment. Sony has wiped up the floor with Nintendo this year (Even after Zelda).

Sega hasn't proven the ability to attract a new customer to any of their systems over the past few years and the Dreamcast isn't offering any technology that isn't currently available on a PC with a 3Dfx card. While the details of the next generation Sony system are still scarce, just remember this word, "photorealistic." That's what you can expect from the folks at Sony when they announce their new system shortly after the holiday season. Don't listen to any of the mindless rumors you may hear in the other magazines, only the good folks at PSExtreme have the real scoop! But what is truly remarkable, is there is no waiting for the next great game on the current PlayStation. Every month, a blockbuster title ships; these are the salad days for the 3rd party publishers. The last thing they need is to sink precious resources in another unknown entity.

MARK'S YEAR-END SUMMARY

As for myself, 1998 was the year I went from an avid reader to a contributing editor. I therefore want to thank Zach for leaving, and Greg for giving me a shot at the "big time."

As for the PlayStation, 1998 was the year that it truly showed off what it was capable of. Every time I thought the system had been pushed to its limits, along came another game that raised the standard even higher.

Interestingly enough, the more complex the games became, the more I found myself drawn to simpler challenges. Thankfully, the PlayStation has plenty of titles that fit the bill, such as: Frogger, Hot Shots Golf, the Arcade's Greatest Hits series, Asteroids, and Einhander. I welcome the trend back towards high scores and away from time-consuming quests with limited replay value.

Many of the PlayStation's longest running series' had their third installments this year—Crash, Tomb Raider, Need for Speed, and Twisted Metal among them. While these games were generally good, I must admit that some of the magic has worn off. Rather than seeing these series extended past their prime, I am hopeful that we will be treated to more innovative titles next year. In addition, I hope that many of the new games I enjoyed — such as Tenchu, Metal Gear Solid, and Vigilante 8 — will generate sequels of their own in 1999.

A follow-up system will eventually arrive, but after seeing the fantastic games that were released in 1998 I am in no hurry. I'm more interested in seeing what the developers have to offer us in 1999. With the Greatest Hits pricing, it's never been easier to accumulate a large number of quality titles. So, don't just look to the future—enjoy playing the games that are here now! Happy Holidays!

ERIC'S YEAR-END SUMMARY

And I thought LAST year was the year of the racing

game! Heck no, '98 was even better. I mean, we've got Test Drive 5, Gran Turismo, and Need for Speed III. Of course, 1998 was also a banner year for another of the PlayStation's staples — platform games. Crash 3, Spyro, Medievil, GEX, Jersey Devil, and Blasto are all showcase quality games. On the adventure side of things, TR3, Duke, Metal Gear Solid, and the Fifth Element all received well-deserved high marks. On the sporting side of things, Hot Shots Golf, MLB 99, NFL Blitz, Knockout Kings, and NBA Live 99 made this one of the stronger all-around years for the PlayStation. My personal top ten for 1998; 1) Hot Shots Golf, 2) Test Drive 5, 3) Medievil, 4) MGS, 5) NFL Blitz, 6) Gran Turismo, 7) Knockout Kings, 8) TR3, 9) MLB 99, and 10) Blasto. When I look into my crystal ball, what do I see in-store for 1999? Well, what I see are more sequels, and I'm getting sick of sequels (unless they're really good). Gimme something original. Certainly, sports games are the most notorious for sequels, and hopefully they get it into gear soon. NFL Blitz proved a good arcade game can make it, so I'm looking for someone (anyone!) to do a Baseball Stars or Super Baseball 2020 type of game. As for the rest of the sports games, they can certainly benefit by taking a page from Hot Shots Golf — don't give the gamer everything at once. Instead, make them earn it, and thus, the more they play, the more they see. This philosophy can be applied to all sorts of areas. I mean, play any football, basketball, or hockey game and you've seen every type of animation after two or three games. I want to see something new 20 games into the season!

GREG'S YEAR-END SUMMARY

Another year has fallen by the wayside, and with it a ton of great PlayStation gaming experiences as well. Who can forget such gems early on in the year, like Resident Evil 2, GEX: Enter the Gecko and Tekken 3? What's more impressive, is that the hits kept on coming throughout '98. There wasn't a month that went by in without one or two great games being released. Some of my personal favorites were the sleepers, such as EA's Reboot, Sony's Bloody Roar and Turbo Prop Racing, and Activision's Nightmare Creatures. Of course, there were a bunch of no-brainers as well, which included Medievil, Spyro the Dragon, Crash Bandicoot 3, Gran Turismo, Tomb Raider 3, NFL Blitz, Test Drive 5, Need for Speed III and, lest I forget, Metal Gear Solid. In fact, this is one of the most impressive things about 1998. While there were a ton of games that came out (including plenty of stinkers as well) there were just as many good, if not downright excellent, games released. If you do a quick comparison to Nintendo's product lineup for the year, I'm sure you'll agree that their software was mostly weighed down by a vast majority of mediocre titles.

Looking forward to '99, it's easy to see that the PlayStation certainly isn't on its way out. While there are whispers of new hardware waiting in the wings, developers are still taking the PlayStation places it hasn't been to before. My prediction is that '99 will be even better. There are already a great number of big games on the horizon, such as Konami's Silent Hill, Namco's R4, Square EA's Final Fantasy VIII and a host of SCEA sequels which just might include another Crash, Gran Turismo, PaRappa the Rapper, Medievil and Spyro the Dragon. As usual, I thought I'd take the last bit of this summary to thank all of our readers, on behalf of all of us at Dimension Publishing, for continuing to support PSExtreme. This is a life-long passion for everyone involved and we're glad you can come along for the ride.

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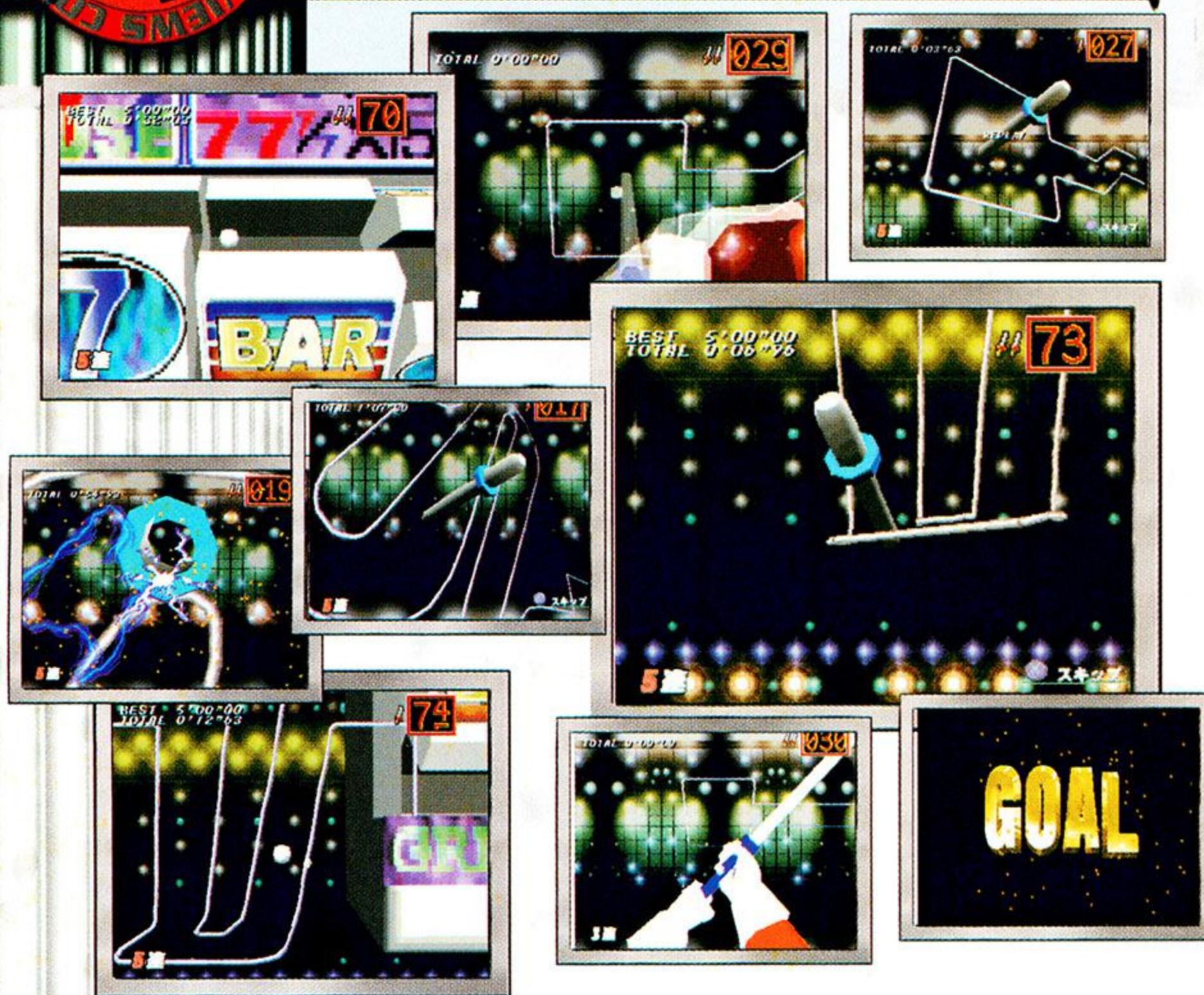


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IRRITATING STICK

JALECO • DECEMBER

Jaleco's recent crop of acquired games from Japan include this interesting puzzle game that is basically a test of the player's dexterity. Sure to be the brunt of many a game reviewer's bad jokes, Irritating Stick challenges the player to maneuver an electrically charged, metal stick through a similarly charged 3D maze without ever touching the sides. Much like the carnival game where you have to get the ring all the way down to the bottom of a twisted, rotating bar, one touch on any of the maze's sides will result in an electric shock and game over. In addition to the many twists, turns and tight areas to get through, there is an added time element that continually counts down as you navigate your stick through each maze. In order to beat each progressive level successfully, you will not only have to have a steady hand, but utilize different speeds as well. You can speed up or slow down your stick, but go too fast into a turn, and you'll end up getting burned. Irritating Stick has a few different modes, including a TV Mode, where a crazy announcer gives the play-by-play in progress as well as a two-player split-screen option. In addition, the game utilizes the Dual Shock very well, with a fierce vibration every time you touch the sides of a maze with your stick. While not the best-looking PlayStation title out there, there is something addictive about the game that makes you want to keep playing over and over, in an effort to beat each maze. Jaleco's Irritating Stick will be available this December.

PAC-MAN 3D

NAMCO • 1ST QUARTER

Namco's Pac-Man 3D has come a long way since it was first debuted two years ago at E3. Originally developed in-house at their American offices, that version of the game was scrapped, as the Japanese arm of the company felt it wasn't up to their quality standards. After going back to the drawing board, the result is a much smoother and more focused 3D adventure. Pac-Man 3D will be the first time the little yellow pellet gobbler is featured in a totally free 3D environment. In the game, Pac can run, jump, swim and rocket his way through 30-plus levels, which include his house, a ghost town, a pellet factory and even an archeological dig site where you will be able to unearth historical Pac-Man memorabilia. Fans of the original 2D Pac-Man won't be disappointed either. The game also includes the original pellet-munching, ghost-chasing maze action, only this time in 3D. Expect to encounter all of the original favorite characters such as Inky, Blinky, and Clyde, along with a whole new cast of characters. Original music and mazes from the classic Pac-Man coin-op will also be featured.



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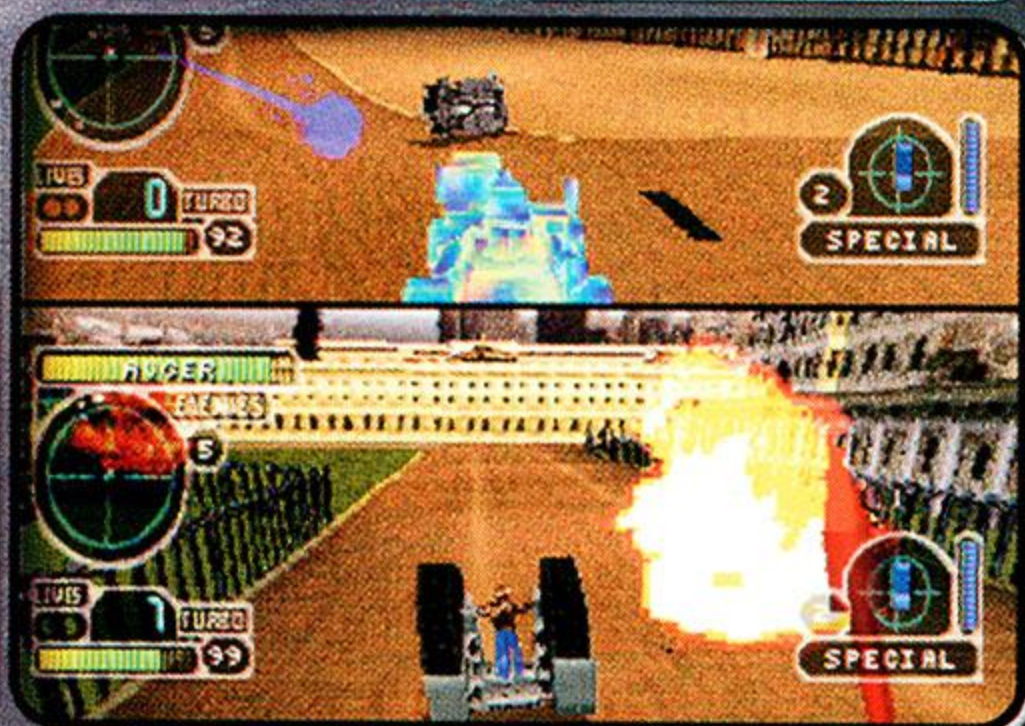


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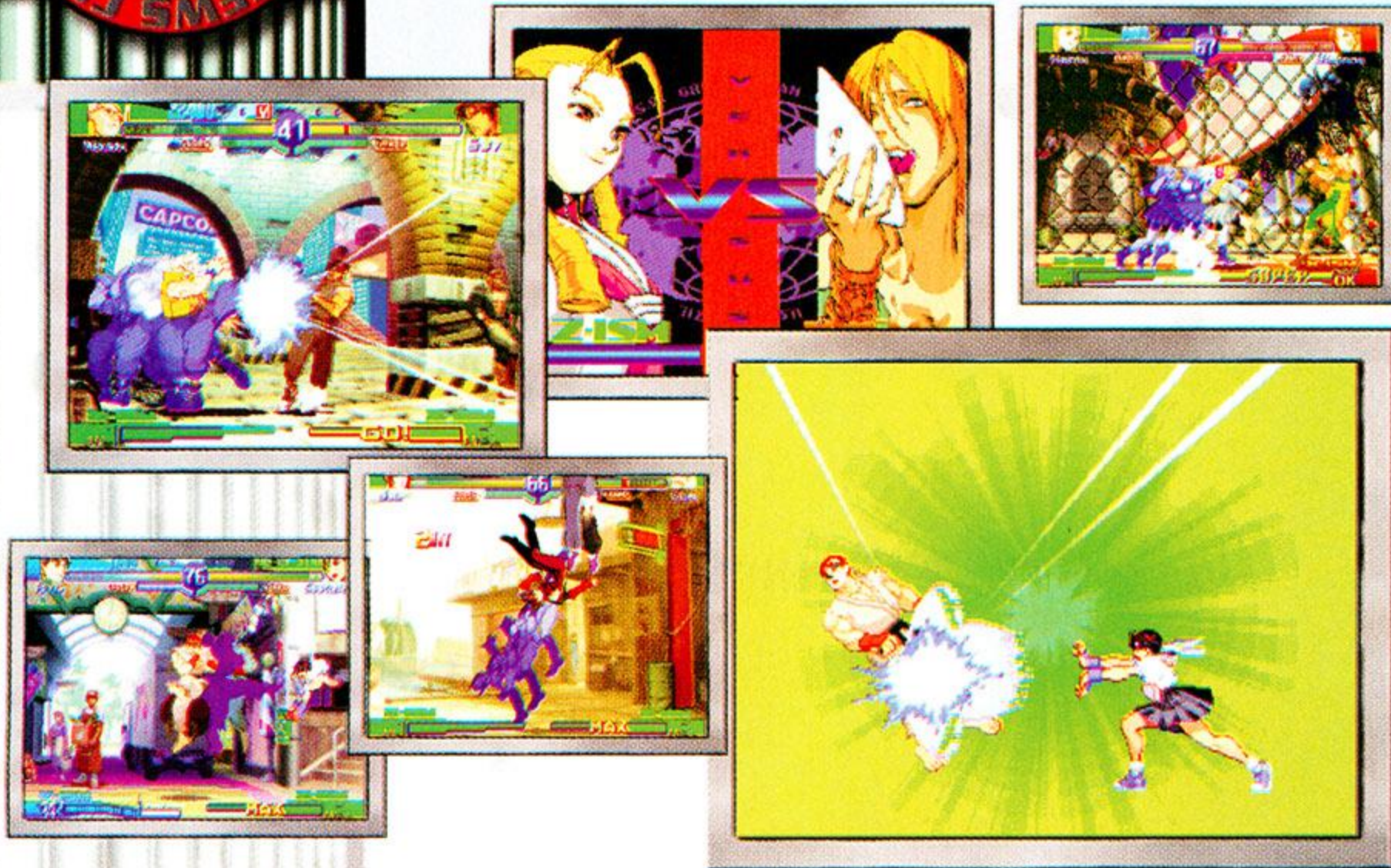
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MARVEL VS SF

CAPCOM • FEBRUARY

Capcom has yet another 2D coin-op translation for the PlayStation up its sleeve. Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter features the best fighters from its impressive line-up of characters, including Ryu, Ken, Chun-Li, Akuma, Zangief, M. Bison, Dhalsim, Sakura and Dan (from the Street Fighter series), as well as Cyclops, Captain America, The Hulk, Wolverine, Spiderman, Omega Red, Shuma-Gorath and Blackheart (from the various Marvel and X-Men titles). Some features found in the game are Variable Counters, Assists and Combinations, Hyper Cancels, a Recovery Gauge System and Dual Shock Compatibility. There are also a variety of play modes from which to choose, including Battle Mode (the original arcade mode), Versus Mode, Cross Over Mode (allowing you to play the arcade tag-team mode with a limited combination of characters), and a Training Mode. Marvel vs. Street Fighter will be available this February.



ELIMINATOR

PSYGNOSIS • FEBRUARY

Another post-apocalyptic title from Psygnosis, Eliminator straps the player unvoluntarily in a futuristic craft, with the only objective being to escape. The race is on to blast your way out of captivity as a prisoner of war. You've been shot down and transported to a military weapons-testing arena where your captor's arsenal is about to be tried out — on you. Eliminator features over 30 different types of enemies to battle, vast playing areas with eight different levels and eight bonus stages, 16 varied events to complete, including "The Wheel of Death" and the "Iron Maiden", 12 different ballistic weapons to choose from and four super-fast craft to fly. Focusing on intense arcade-action, Eliminator is set to release this February.

EXPECTING

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ROLLCAGE

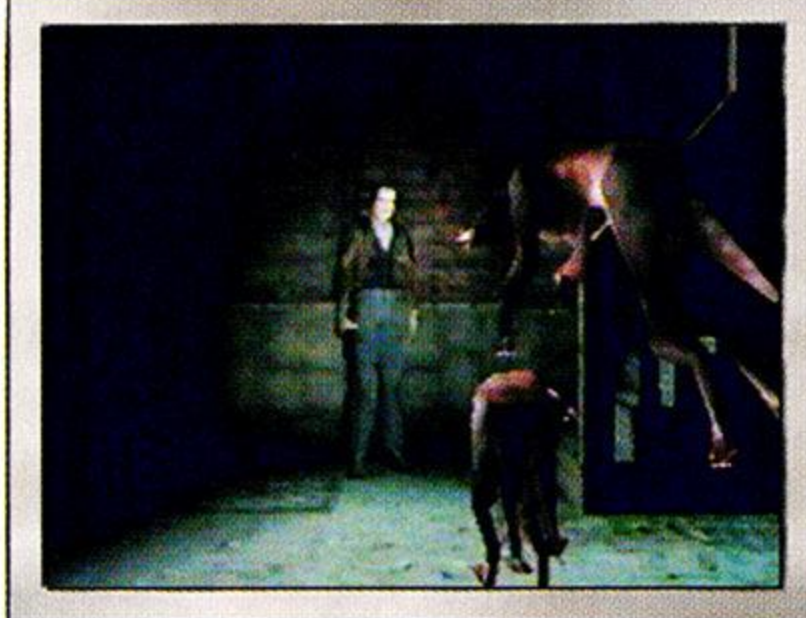
PSYGNOSIS • MARCH

If there's one category where Psygnosis is most in their element, it would be racing games. From Destruction Derby to Wipeout, to F1 Racing, they know how to make a satisfying game of driving. Enter their newest game on four wheels — Rollcage — which takes some of the best elements of Wipeout and then literally turns them upside down. In the game, players will control buggy-like vehicles which, given you get up enough speed, can drive on tunnel walls, ceilings and even upside down. In addition, ATD (the developers) have added a new play mechanic where you can obliterate many of the roadside buildings and objects by crashing into them (much like Nintendo's Blast Corps). If you do this at the right moment, any cars behind you will be caught in the destruction and be sent hurtling through the air. Add these crazy physics together with an arsenal of futuristic weaponry, a nice graphic engine and a bevy of special effects, and you've got another quality Psygnosis experience. Look for Rollcage in March.

SILENT HILL

KONAMI • FEBRUARY

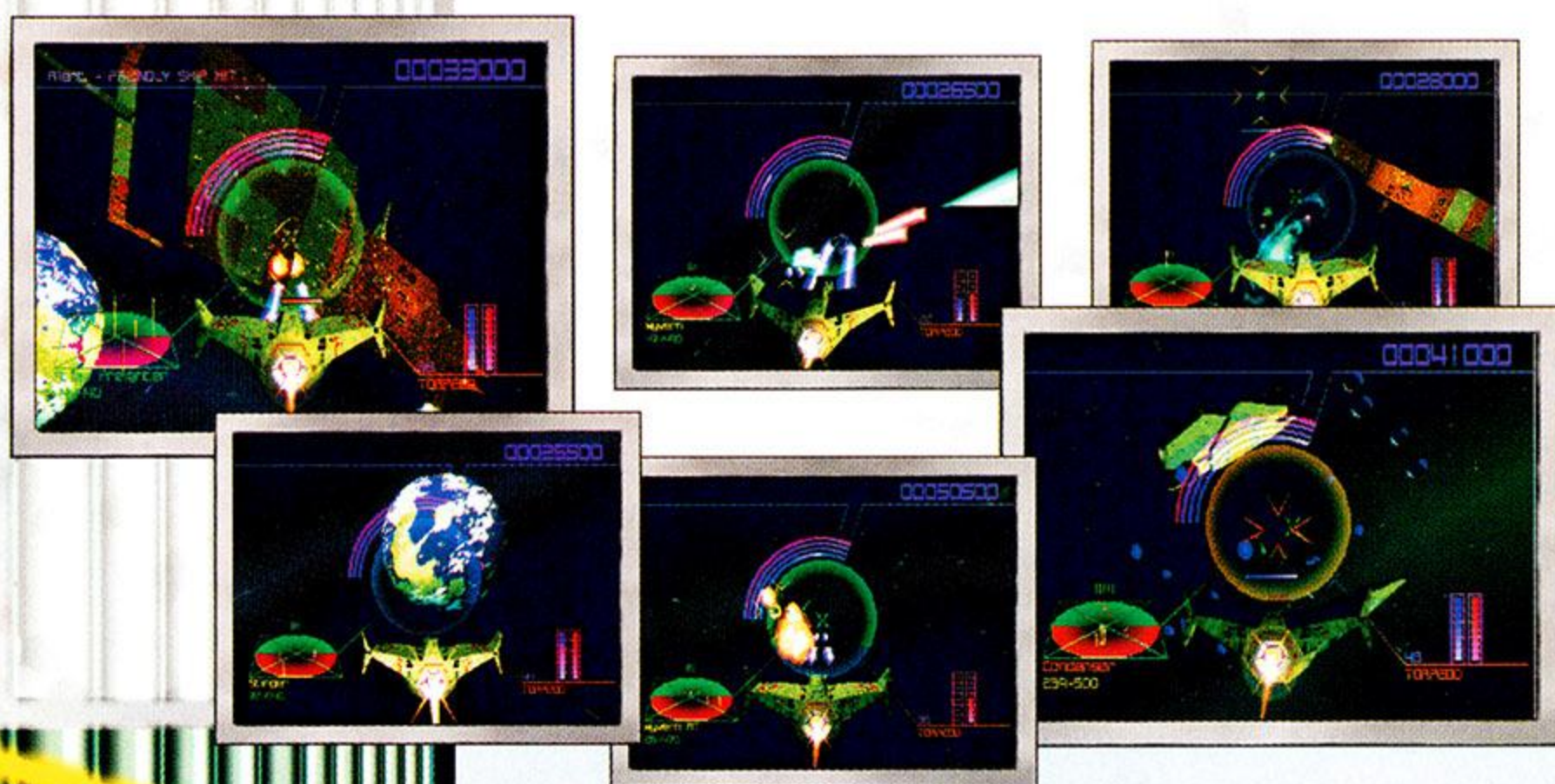
Konami is still hush-hush on their next big, upcoming PlayStation title, except for the release date, which is slated for the end of February. A surprise at last year's E3, Silent Hill has all of the makings of a quality Resident Evil-style adventure, except that the game is played out in total 3D versus RE's pre-rendered backgrounds. The game chronicles a father's quest to find his lost daughter who disappears into the night fog after a terrible automobile accident. The nearby town, where he goes searching for her, turns out to be brimming with evil and mystery, lurking in every shadow and alleyway. One of Silent Hill's most notable features is its camera system, which pans, zooms and skews its angles to give the game a horror movie look and feel. As evidenced with Metal Gear Solid, you can rest assured that Konami will spare no expense in the production values department.



BLAST RADIUS

PSYGNOSIS • JANUARY

Shown in our Export section a few months back, Blast Radius is Psygnosis' arcade cousin to Colony Wars. Instead of giving the player a ton of detailed missions to complete, Blast Radius focuses more on the intense action of dogfighting in space. Using a similar graphic engine to the first Colony Wars, the game comes packed with a ton of special effects and white-knuckle action, with most missions having the player taking on armadas of enemy ships, while dodging fire from oncoming freighters. Included in the game is a multi-player mode via two-player split-screen, or the more obscure link-cable option. Having already been released in the UK, Blast Radius is currently scheduled to hit US shelves in January.



EXPECTING

THE 5 STAGES OF MR. DOMINO ADDICTION

As reported by OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE



1.
CONFUSION
("What the hell is that...?")

2.
CONDESCENSION
("heh heh. What a silly little game...")

3.
DENIAL
("I'm only playing until the next level.")

4.
ADDICTION
("I'm only playing until I get to the next level
—and this time I mean it. DO YOU HEAR
ME MR. DOMINO?!? ONLY ONE MORE!!!!")

5.
ACCEPTANCE
("I love you Mr. Domino.")



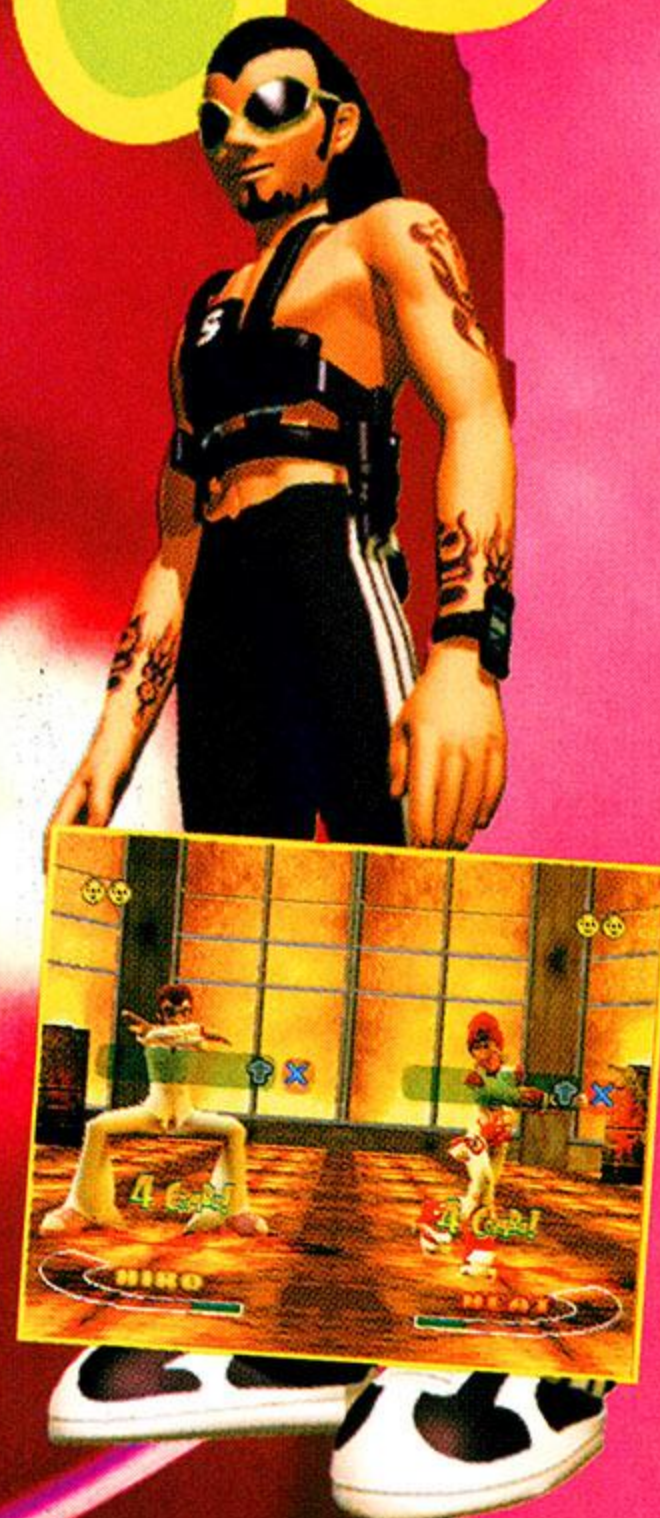
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SPORTS



EDITORIAL

The holiday season is here and I'm not doing what I used to like to do during the holiday season — watch NBA hoops on my dish. What gives? Why can't these uncontrollable owners and self-indulgent players figure out a way to divide TWO BILLION dollars? Owners complain that they're not making any (or enough) money, and the players feel put-upon that they are not "allowed" to make as much as they can, and that they have to grab all they can now because they could suffer a career ending injury and never play again. Well, I have just a couple of thoughts on the matter. First, to the owners — YOU have the ability to control how much you spend. If you can't, and you're losing money, then sell the team and stop whining. What? Nobody out there to buy the Nuggets? Fine, then let them fold. If the league can't support 30 teams (and it can't, besides the fact that there are not enough quality players to go around anyway), then what's wrong with a league of 22-24 teams? Answer — nothing!

Now, to the players — nobody OWES you anything. You get what you get and you don't pitch a fit. You don't like it, you have the option of doing something else, right (you know, like flipping burgers for a living)? But, you want to try and hold the owners hostage because you think that you're the show. Point is, about 80% of you are replaceable, and you are the ones that should be on your knees thanking the owners for WHATEVER they pay you. The other 20% (and Patrick, your days in this group are numbered), might want to consider starting your own league, and thinking about how "successful" you'd be.

The fact of the matter is that sports is big business, and it has nothing at all to do with the fans. The TV rev-

enue accounts for the bulk of the money generated, and I can't foresee anything changing until the TV ratings are so dismal that the advertisers won't pay the rates that the NBA needs to support its habit. When this happens, owners will need to jack up the ticket prices in order to pay Alonzo's 100 Million contract. The problem there is that the average ticket price is CURRENTLY too steep for the average fan to attend, so what do you think's going to happen when they raise ticket prices another 100%? I can hear it now, "Yes, I'd like to pay \$75.00 per ticket to sit in the nose-bleed section for the Clipper-Warrior game, please". Uh, yeah.

Anyway, back to planet earth, where the players are only polygonal characters that do what you tell them (and YOU are the owners), the big board changes this month to Accolade's Test Drive 5. I've been playing a ton of this racing game, and I'm amazed at something different every time I race. Anywho, enjoy the holidays, and be sure to play lots of games (like I need to tell you that).

Eric

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RALLY CROSS 2



Rally Cross 2 never lets you relax. I can't think of a better thing to say about a racing game. The level of intensity is up there with Test Drive 5, Need for Speed 3, Moto Racer and Gran Turismo. It also does what every good sequel should do — improve the things that needed improv-

ing (vehicle control) and expand the things that made the game a success (on/off-road racing, great physics and unique track design).

Rally Cross 2 starts by getting a major facelift to its graphic engine. The game looks great and it FLIES! While there are no licensed vehicles to be found, the original cars that are in the game are cool looking and the design team has been able to implement techno-stuff like environmental mip-mapping and reflections in windshields. In addition, the feature list has been improved as well. RC 2 now includes 10 different tracks, three of which are available in the Rookie season campaign — you must win the rookie season to open up the next three on Veteran, etc. It also allows you to customize your car in six different ways — including a choice of paint. But, the big addition is the Track Editor, which allows the player to have control over 17 different graphic/design features and save your creations to memory card. The game also supports analog/Dual Shock control and offers a



competitors, while small in number, are tough. You will find yourself on the edge of your seat at all times during a race. You have the lead? It's tenuous, at best. In last place, can't see the guy in front of you? You are probably not going to recover. Rally Cross 2 has VERY precise play mechanics — a combination of the terrain and how your vehicle reacts to it. If you hit the mud, vs. the dry dirt, you will lose just a little bit of speed and time. That is all your competition needs. You have to CONSTANTLY be aware of your surroundings, and they are varied in nature. Water, mud, trains, rock formations, trees, mud puddles, rivers, ice, snow banks and much more all play a role in your success or failure. Rally Cross 2 absolutely requires that the player know the course, or he/she will not win. It is this challenge that is at the heart of the title's success.

Lastly, I think that the other area where RC 2 separates itself from its competition and provides a truly unique driving experience is in its graphic detail. The courses are loaded with people that react to you passing, flying, or rolling by. There are flags waving, the sounds of trains in the warehouse yard, some of the best drawn trees that you'll see in a racing game, etc. All of these little

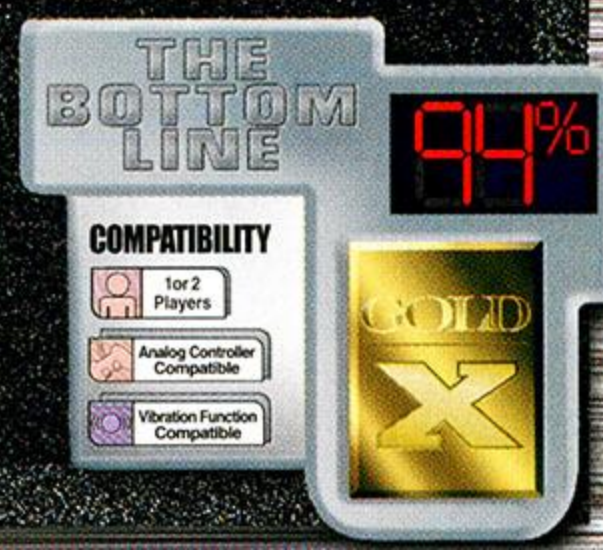
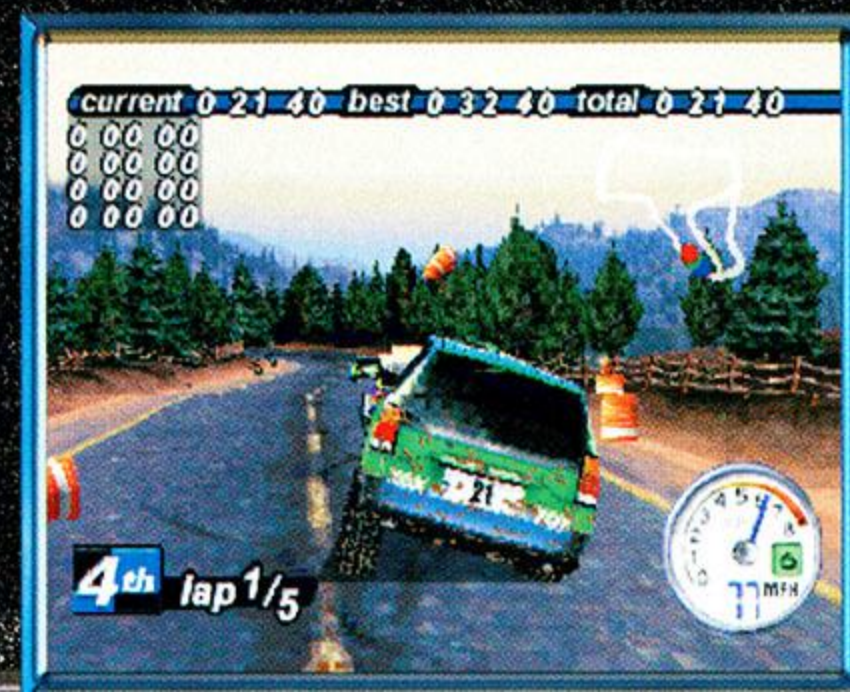
touches add up to a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

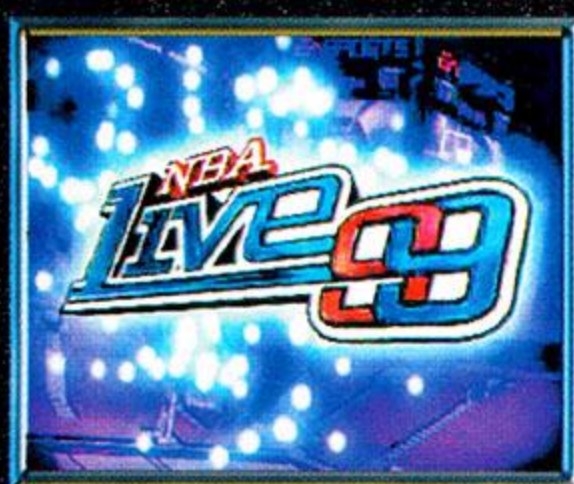
Last year, the original Rally Cross was a great selling title, but not a great game. With Rally Cross 2, 989 and Idol Minds have taken a great idea and put the gameplay right on course. A wide variety of graphic looks, excellent speed, unique and solid play mechanics and addictive gameplay add up to make Rally Cross 2 an excellent addition to any racing fan's game library.



two player game. There isn't a whole lot of window dressing (i.e. modeled car showcases, 3D track analysis, etc.), but the graphic and gameplay core of the game is rock solid.

But the big change is in the gameplay. Rally Cross 2 supports superior control to its predecessor (one of our big complaints last year — when there was no Dual Shock available in the US market). The analog control is seamless and, when you roll your vehicle, it's a simple push of the L1 or R1 buttons to get it upright again. The other three





DEVELOPED BY EA SPORTS
PUBLISHED BY EA
WRITTEN BY ERIC

REVIEW **PSExtreme**
SPORTS

PAGE 57

NBA LIVE 99



For diehard NBA junkies, NBA Live 99 may be as close to the real thing as they'll get this year. This is may be your only chance to see Garnet slam, Kidd dish, and Barkley complain. Yes, thanks to EA Sports' new facial expressions on the individual players, you can now see the guys smile,

laugh, and pout — according to the press release anyway. So far, through a dozen games into my season, I have not seen anyone laugh, but there's lots of pouting going on. Great, just what I need to see — a bunch of grumpy Gus' frowning as they get pulled from the game after picking up their third or fourth foul. And, thanks to the fixed camera angle, you are forced to watch these overpaid weenies scowl as they walk back to the bench (am I sounding a tad cynical toward the players?). You can't even hit a button to cancel it out — aauuughhhhh! Uh, anyway, that's enough of that. Also new for '99 is a high

flying arcade mode (bigger dunks) and a practice mode that lets you take a dude onto the floor and work on jumpers, dunks, whatever. Oh, the 3 point contest is still in there.

OK, I'll just come right out and say it — NBA Live 99 may be the best playing game of hoops since Live 95 on the Genesis. Although I really liked last year's Live, as a 1 player game it just couldn't stand up. The computer never offered a challenge, even on the highest difficulty setting, so the game pretty much languished on the shelf until a friend would come over. This time around, however, the computer puts up a real nice effort, as it will often double team you, trap you in the corners, and apply lots of full court pressure (if you're ahead in the fourth quarter, that is).

The best part of it is, though, is that the computer doesn't "cheat" to stay with you (i.e., they don't shoot 80%). Just about every game I've played has seen shooting percentages in the 40-50 percent range. The computer moves the ball around, sets picks, dri-

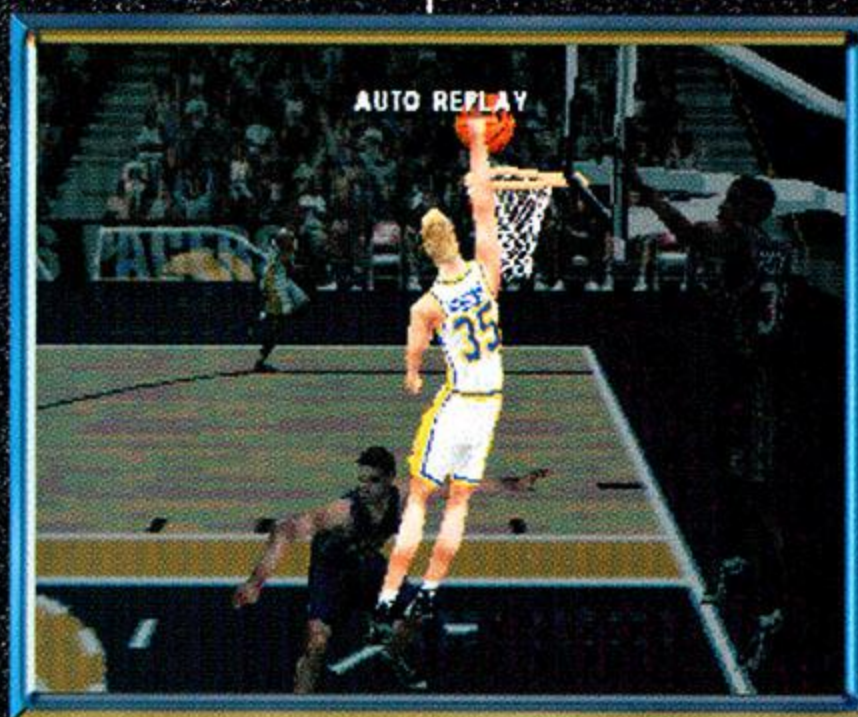
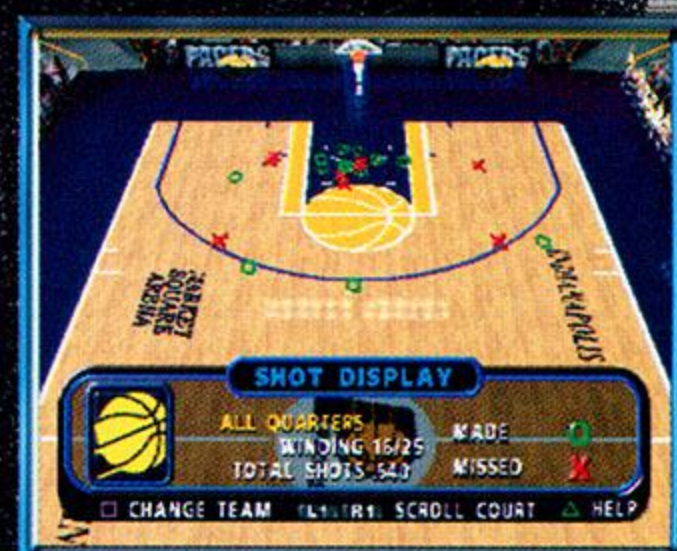
ves the lane, posts up the big fellas, and kicks out to the little guys. I'm playing my season on All-Star difficulty, and there seems to be a good balance between the number of blocks, steals, missed shots, dunks, 3-in-the-keys, illegal defenses and fouls. Speaking of fouls, I'm going to the line at least ten times a game (five minute quarters), which has to be more than in any other game, and that's a good thing! You can set the camera angle to be "random" when shooting Free Throws, so you always get a different look at the hoop. As far as in-game camera angles are concerned, EA does camera angles better than anyone, so all of the ones from last year are in '99 (if it ain't broke, don't fix it). My angle of choice is the "Follow" cam, which is slightly perched, and allows you to see the lanes on a fastbreak, yet it zooms in on action in the key.

Now, Live 99 is a fantastic game, and easily the best one yet for the PlayStation, but it's not perfect, and let me tell you why. First, I don't want to see Mullin and Mark Jackson and similar type players jumping off of two feet and doing monster jams. Second, I DO want to see anyone over 6'8" throwing it down when they're standing under the hoop — how many times do I have to see them put it off the glass and MISS!

Thirdly (word?), the league stats leaders need to reflect; A) your setup choices — if you're playing with no fatigue, guys should play the entire game, and thus score more than 7 a game, B) the best guys on a team need to shoot the ball. I don't want to play

against the Pistons and see Grant Hill take four shots!

These complaints notwithstanding, NBA Live 99 is an excellent update to the series and one that you won't tire of any time soon.



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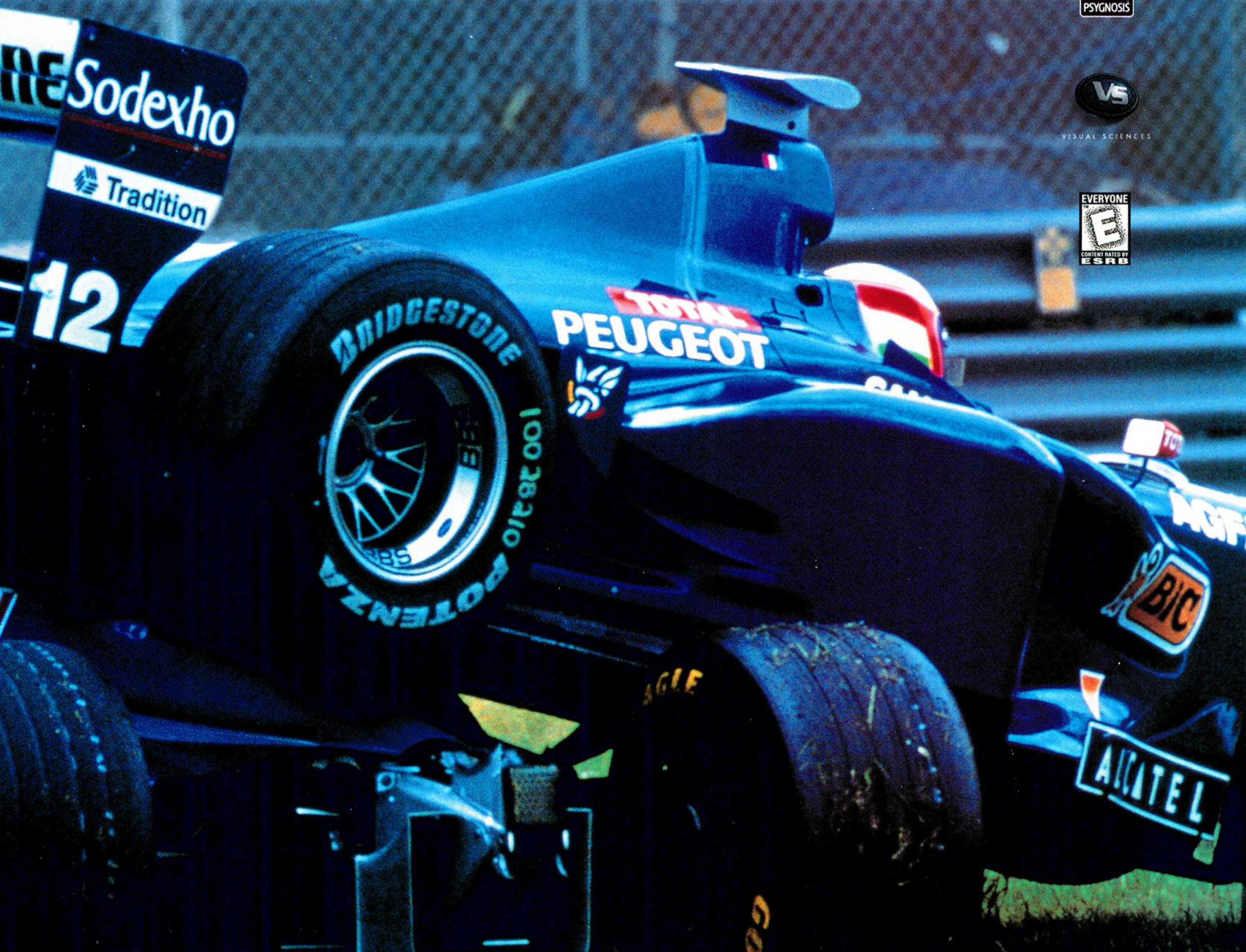
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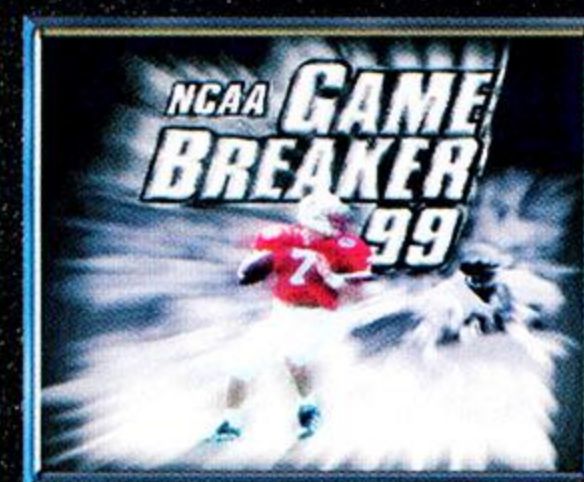
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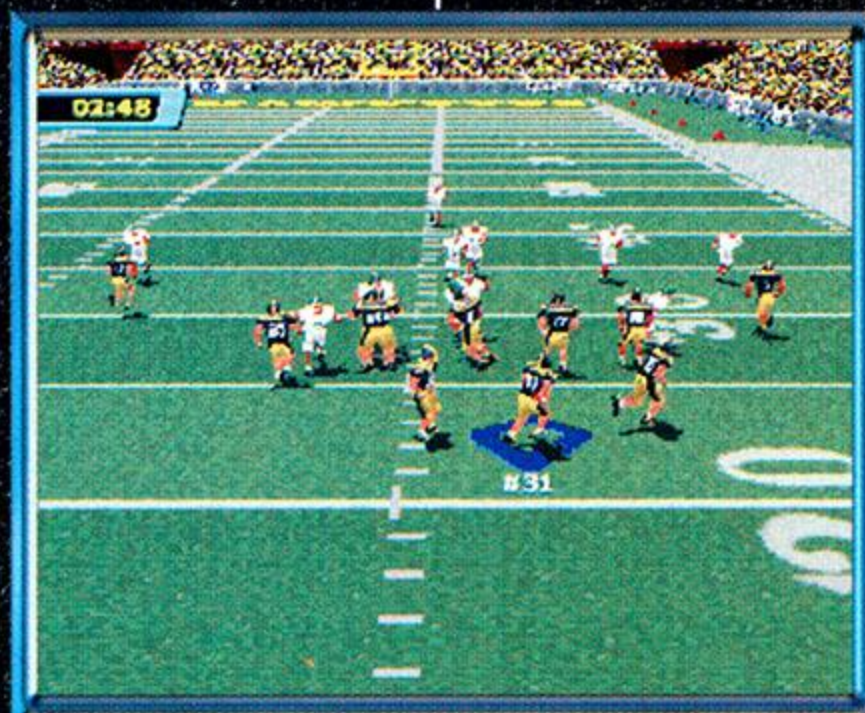
10 cars on the track • New racing simulation engine with a representative physics model • All new features include G-force driver head movements, animated pit stops, race replays, and more.

NCAA GAMEBREAKER 99



NCAA GameBreaker 99 is, for all intents and purposes, NFL GameDay 99 with fight songs, pompoms and college rules. In other words, great football action for those of you whose allegiances aren't directed at any of the big cities and the professional teams that play in front of them.

The things that make GameBreaker 99 different from GameDay 99? 112 Division 1-A schools; ABC's Keith Jackson behind the mic (his first appearance in a video game coming as he embarks on a farewell tour before heading into retirement at the end of this season); stadium touches that do a decent job of trying to capture the color, flavor and pageantry of college football; playbooks that include unique college formations; 18 real bowl games; the Heisman Trophy; and a top 25 poll. In addition, GameBreaker 99 allows players to build their own powerhouse through the game's "Blue-Chip Recruiting" mode — akin to GameDay's draft mode, and create their own plays. (Oh, how we've tried at Texas Tech... if it wasn't for those damn NCAA rules — showing up for bonehead classes can be so inconvenient!) One other notable addition; taking advantage of the extra few weeks that the team had to work on GameBreaker, they have included analog control — which was missing in GameDay 99. This inclusion is a welcome one and the character control is extremely tight



when using the Dual Shock controller.

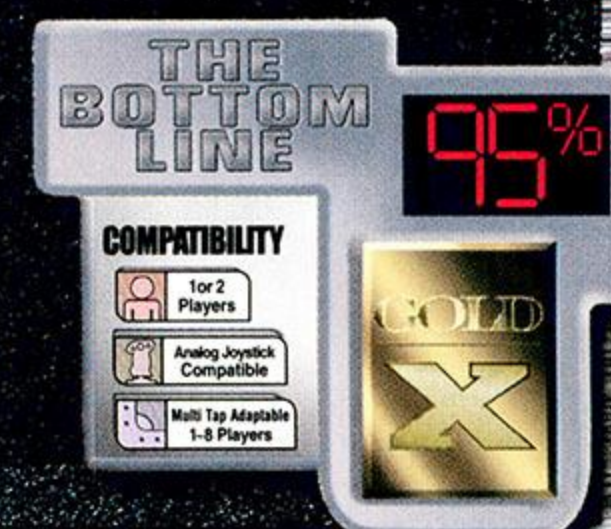
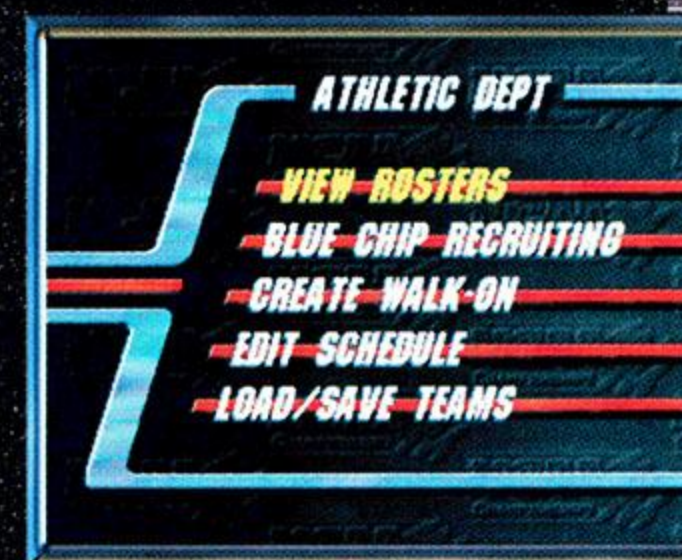
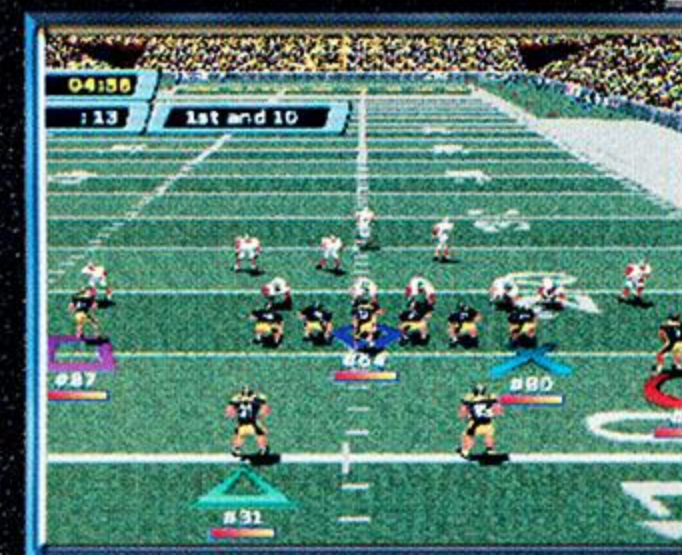
If you are an experienced GameDay/GameBreaker player, then you will want to make a few adjustments right away. Unless your school is a dog, you will want to immediately bump the difficulty up to "Junior" (default is "Sophomore"), and increase the speed of the game and the clock — this will give you a much more intense battle against the computer. Also, make sure that you mix up the run and the pass — while GameDay 99 made it so that you

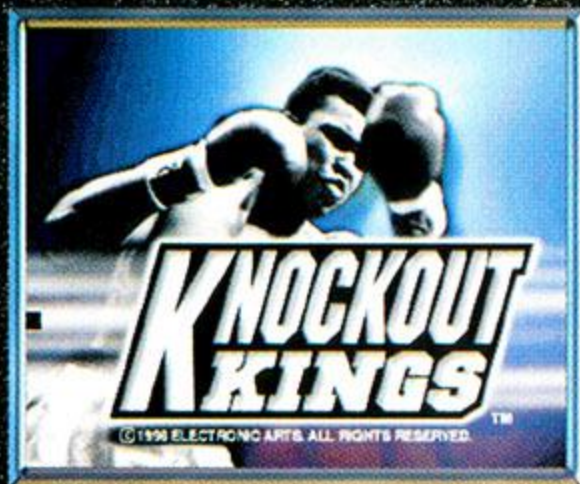
wanted to run before passing, you can break the computer defense down quicker by mixing up your play calling and maintaining a good run/pass balance.

As always, the answer to the question of whether or not you should purchase the college game is largely dependent upon your own tastes and how big of a fan you are. If you ONLY enjoy college football and eschew the professional game, then NCAA GameBreaker 99 is going to be a Platinum title for you. If you already own GameDay 99 but still love the college game, great, you will thoroughly enjoy GB 99. If you bought GD 99, but want something completely different in your second football game, you won't get it here.

My personal tastes have always leaned toward the pro game. Having grown up in the San Francisco Bay Area, we really didn't have any sense of the isolated college town (as I would later experience at Tech) — all of our schools, Stanford, Berkeley and the state schools, were commuter colleges and thus, the fan base has never really extended beyond the gates of the respective campuses. But the Raiders and the 'niners — heck, these guys were our neighbors! (PSExtreme factoid #392: John Madden's wife, Virginia, was Mark's 6th grade reading teacher and Eric's best friend in grammar school was Freddie Biletnikoff's son, Freddie, Jr. — and Art Shell lived around the corner from us.) Because of this, I can never really look at a college football video game the same way that I do an NFL game.

NCAA GameBreaker 99 is an excellent achievement and college fans will love it. I like it too, particularly when I can pilot my Red Raiders past the Hawkeyes of Iowa (my wife's alma mater), just not as much.





DEVELOPED BY PRESS START
PUBLISHED BY EA
WRITTEN BY ERIC

REVIEW PSExtreme
SPORTS

PAGE 61

KNOCKOUT KINGS



the best boxing title available, it's the ONLY one available.

Knockout Kings comes packed full of some of the greatest fighters in recent (and not so recent) memory; Ali, Holyfield, Sugar Ray Leonard, De La Hoya, Hagler, Mancini, Duran, Duran ("save a prayer 'til the morning after..."), Holmes, Norton, and Spinks. The not-so-recent list includes guys like Joe Louis, Jack Dempsey, Rocky Marciano, Jake LaMotta, and Floyd Patterson. All in all, there's just about 40 fighters in the game, plus all of the scrubs that you need to fight in career mode (more on that later).



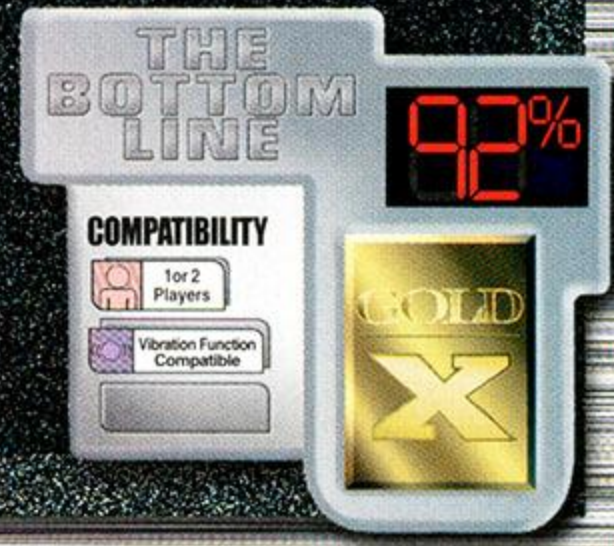
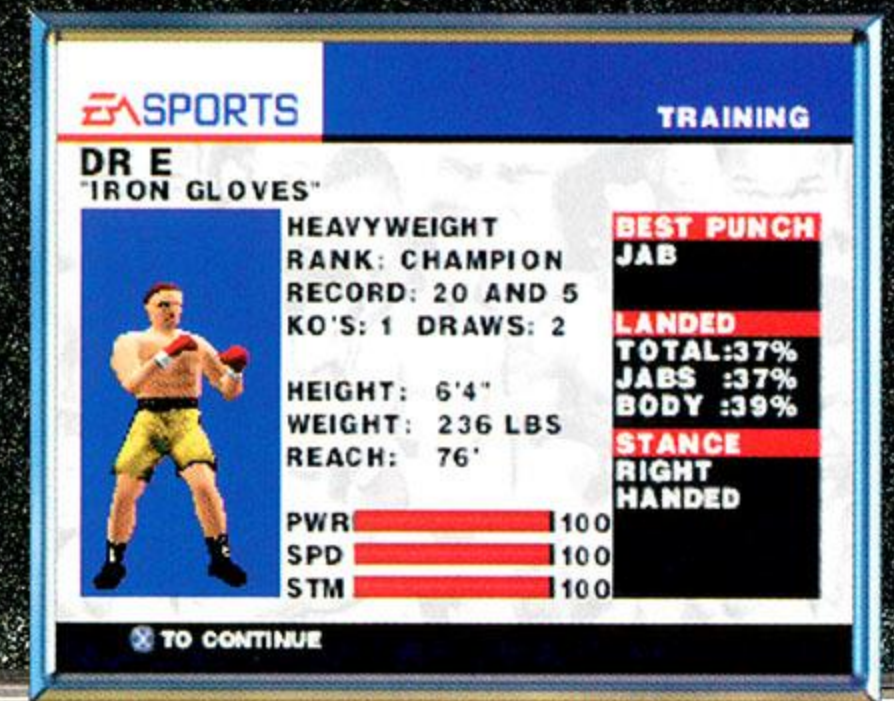
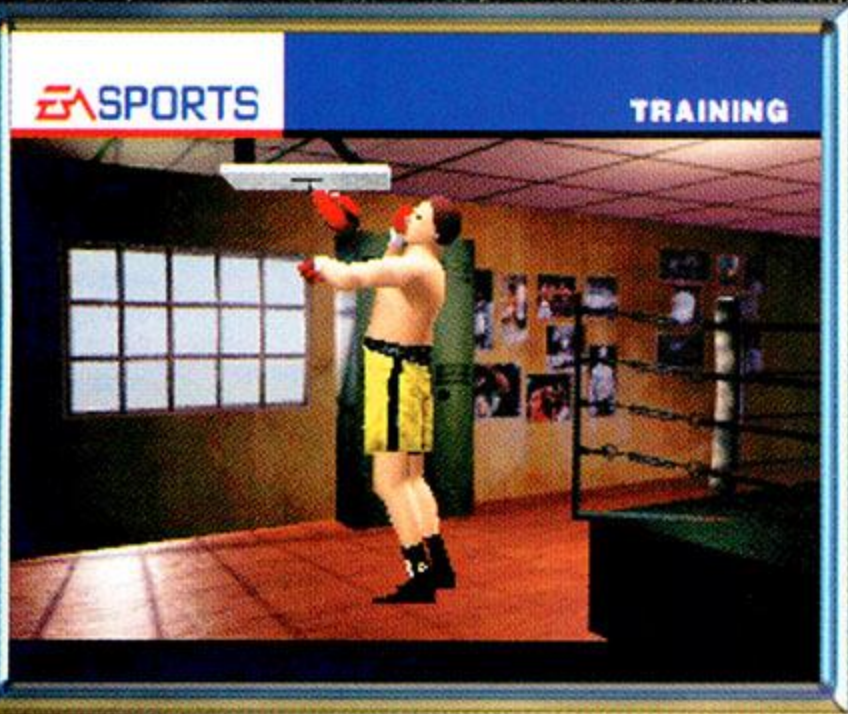
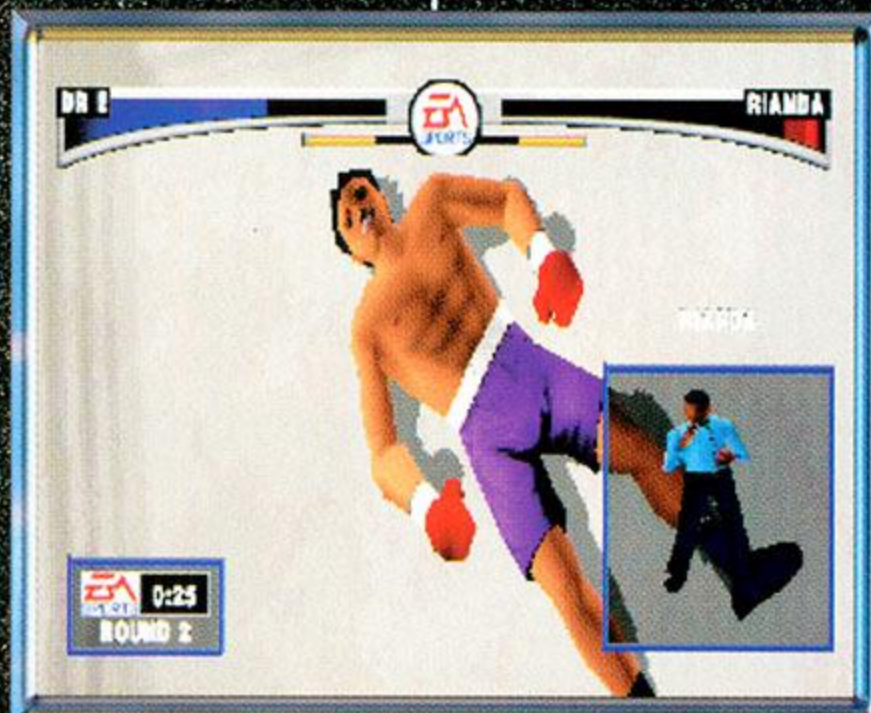
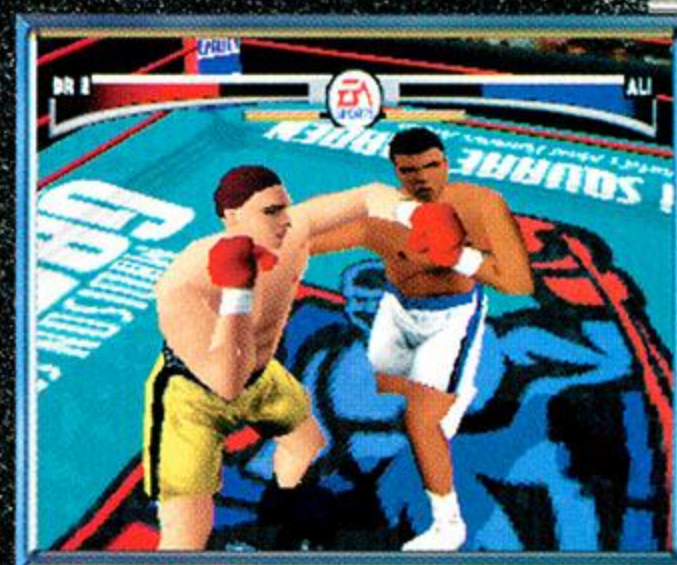
Knockout Kings is played out pretty simply; X for a punch to the body, Triangle for an uppercut, square for a left hook (or jab), and circle for a right hook (or jab). To launch a punch from far away, you hold down R2 and press one of the buttons, and for the ever-popular haymaker (when close-up), it's R2 and the circle button. Lastly, you can pull off a pretty effective combo when you're inside, by pressing R2 and X. Oh, and you can also hit below the belt and throw a kidney punch, but you will be warned, have a point deducted, and then ultimately be disqualified if you continue to throw these punches. On the defensive side of the ring, L1 blocks high, L2 blocks low, duck & weave is L1+L2, and getting into a clinch with your opponent is L1+R1.

OK, so now you know the basics, but what you really want to know is (everybody sing) "How does it play?" — quite nicely, thank you. There are a couple of different options; Exhibition, Slugfest, and Career Mode. In exhibition mode, you can choose any two fighters and have at it, under normal boxing rules. In slugfest, you pick the fighters, the number of rounds (1-3), and then just flail away —

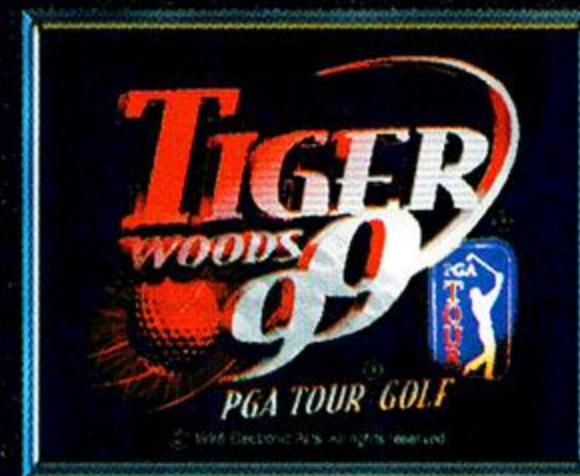
no rules! This mode seems like an afterthought, though, as it really doesn't add anything to the game. Why is this? Well, Knockout Kings is, pure and simple, a SIMULATION. Giving us the ability to hit below the belt without worrying about being penalized won't turn the game into an arcade game (like, say, Punch Out!). Anyway, what Knockout Kings IS all about is the Career mode. First, you'll create your own fighter (and pick a weight division at the same time — Lightweight, Middleweight, or Heavyweight), then start climbing the ladder to become the number one ranked contender. You start out as #20, and can fight #'s 19, 18, or 17. After each fight, you can choose to increase your speed or power by choosing the appropriate training exercise (which you don't actually partake in, it's just a glue-screen kind of thing). Once you make it to the top, then you get to fight the real guys, starting off with Lennox Lewis, then Holmes, and then Moorer, then Ali... and then it's over! I don't know why it ends so soon (there are, after all, another 15 licensed heavyweights you could fight). Bummer.

The key to success in Knockout Kings is using your punches effectively, and not standing around. Your stamina goes down with each punch you throw, so after 7-8 attempts, even if you land a big ol' haymaker, it won't do that much damage to your opponent. So, back off, get the gloves up (thus increasing your stamina meter), then get in there and time your punches. Move around the ring by backing up and side-stepping, always keeping some distance between his gloves and your face! It's this constant movement and quick punching that will get you victories.

Knockout Kings is a welcome addition to the PlayStation's sports library, and a wonderful simulation that pugilist fans will come to appreciate the more they play it. Highly recommended.



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 99



Tiger Woods is the young lad that graces the cover of Golf Digest, GQ, Sports Illustrated, Tiger Beat (if he hasn't, they're missing a golden opportunity), and many other magazines of high standards. His face has also been plastered all over your TV, thanks in part to Nike and American Express.

Now you, thanks to EA Sports, can actually "be like Mike, err, Tige" and use his big hitting abilities to bring five PGA Tour courses to their knees.

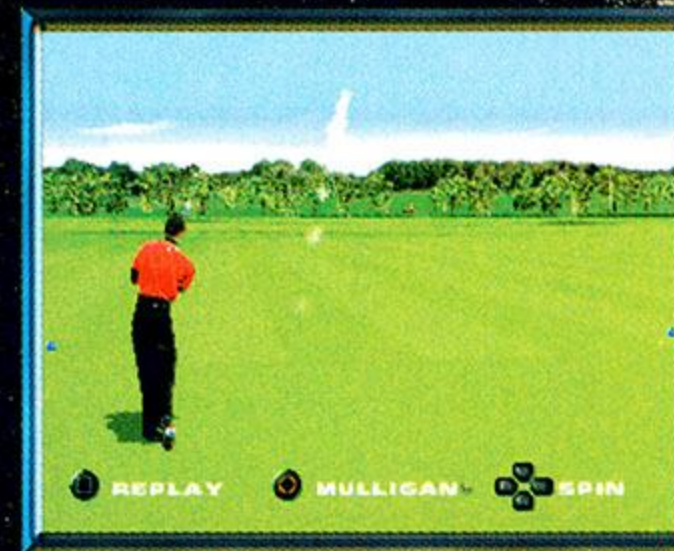
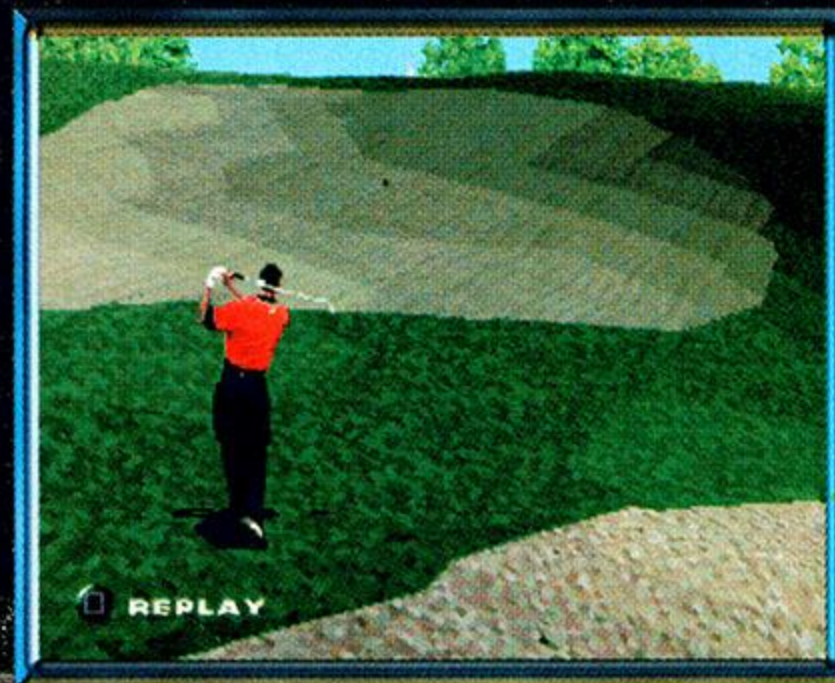
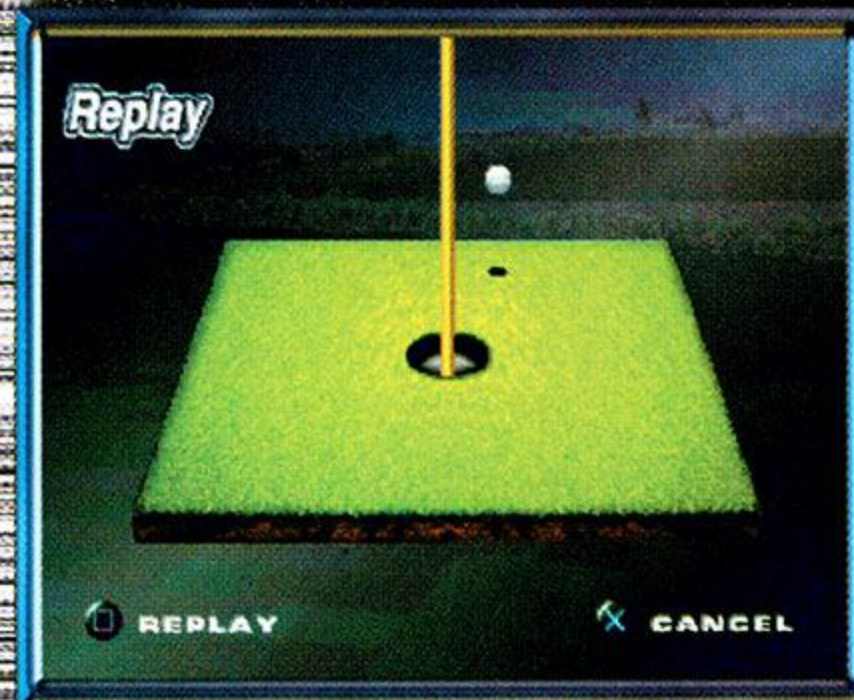
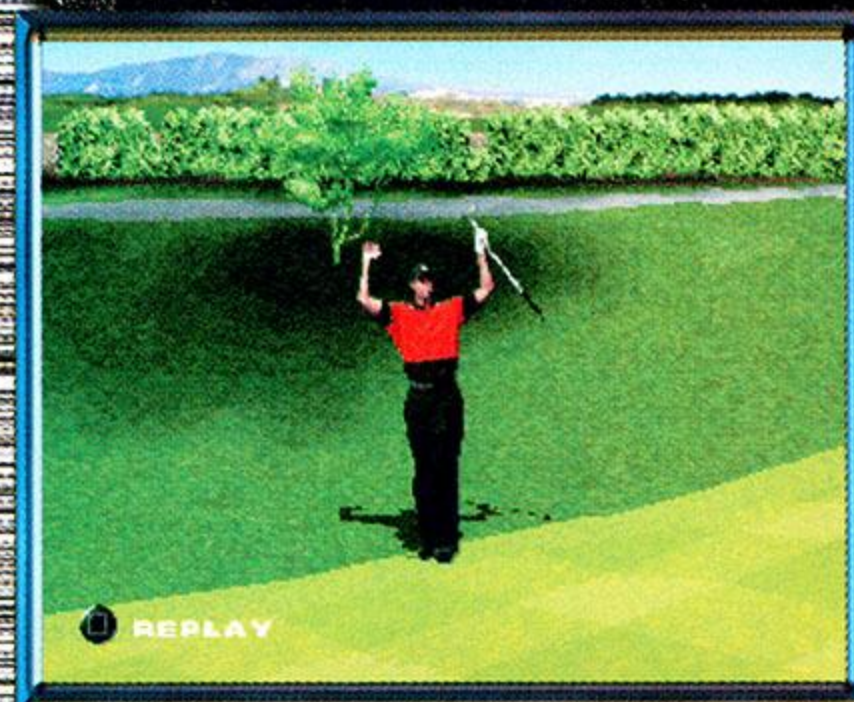
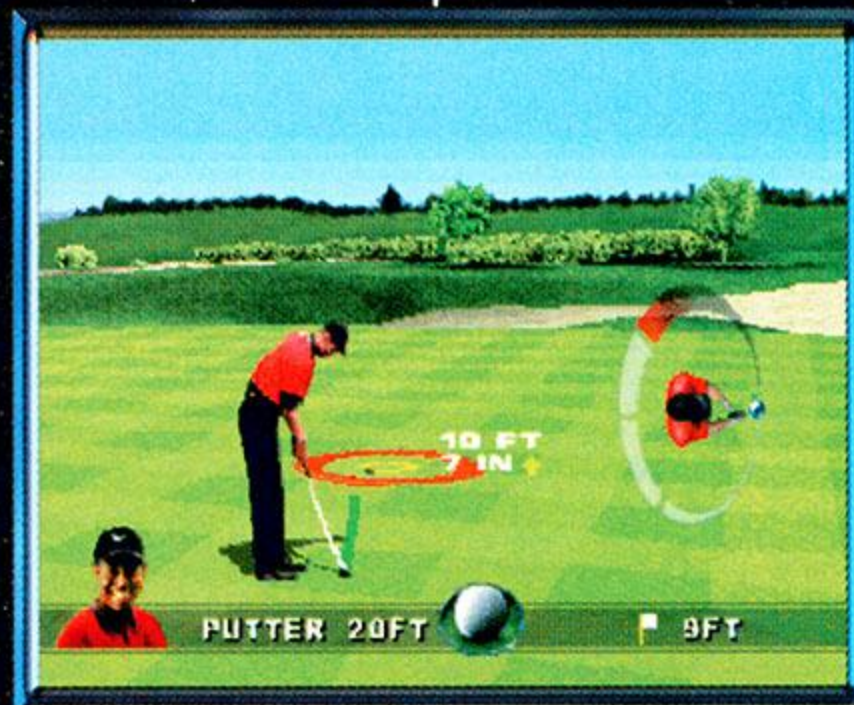
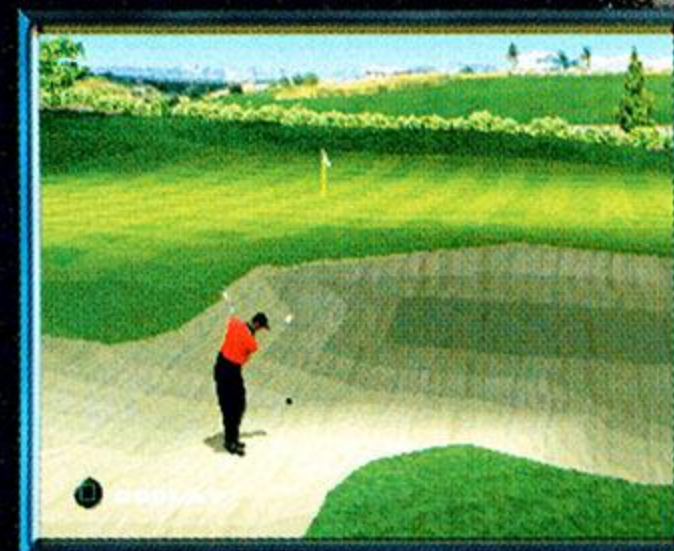
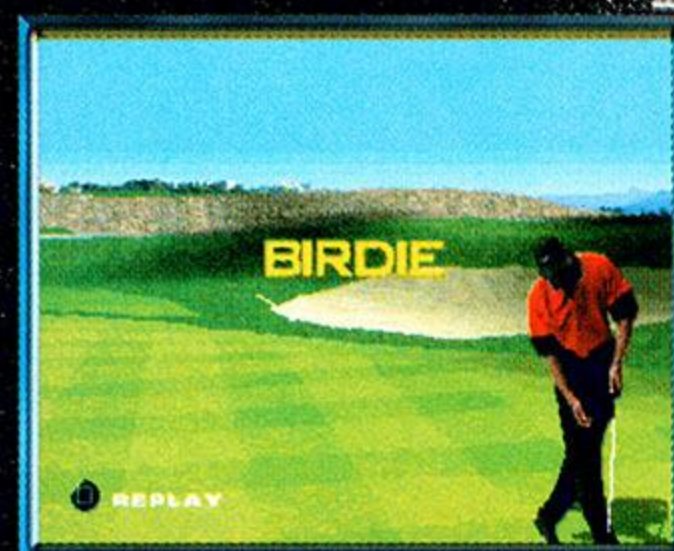
If you are new to the PlayStation, then you may or may not be aware of the fact that this is actually the FOURTH installment of the PGA Tour series for the PlayStation. Yup, PGA Tour 96 started things off a few years back (when games came in the tall plastic boxes), and the game has seen minor face lifts and adjustments over the years. Graphically, Tiger's version of the series looks a lot like last year's version, although the fairways and greens have been cleaned up a bit. The trees still explode in pixelization should your ball get too close, and the players (eight tour pros, including Tiger) remain digitized. Maybe it's just me, but I can't help thinking that digitized people smack of early nineties "FMV" technology and CD-I type games. Each of the courses — Summerlin, Sawgrass, Las Colinas, Southwind, and Scottsdale — all portray a good sense of real-life scale and detailed accuracy. Summerlin has lots of 5,000 square foot homes surrounding the course, while Las Colinas retains all the charm and tree lined fairways of its real-life counterpart. The frame rate, however, can't quite keep pace with the graphics. The ball sort of hangs in the air as the fairways and greens get moved into position for the ball landing — very strange.

Gameplay-wise, Tiger's version of the PGA plays much like the other versions, as the swing meter is the standard pendulum, three click method. However,

there are new features added for Tiger's benefit. First, there is "Tiger Control". What this does is allow you to "steer" the ball after you have hit it. Let's say you shank one off to the right (and Tiger immediately yells "get left"), all you have to do to bring it back into the fairway is to push left on the controller. Next, there's Tiger Charge. If you break par on 3 consecutive holes, then you can take full advantage of Tiger's length by powering it up in the power meter. To me, this seems rather lame. Tiger can't hit the ball 340 yards unless he's got three birdies in a row? Please. And what about the rest of the time? The real Tiger would use a wedge from about 150 and in. In this game, on pro level, he's got to use an 8-iron. Heck, that's what us regular weekend hacks use! I want to be like Tiger, and smack my 5-iron 240 yards! Is that too much to ask? And, lastly, there are Tiger Taunts. Yes, as your opponent gets up to hit the ball, you can press one of the icon buttons to say something like "No pressure" or "Four!" Great.

You can play a Skins Match, Tournament, Foursomes Match, Practice any hole, practice at the range, Shoot-Out, Four Ball, and Tour Play. In Tour Play, you play a four round tournament at each of the five courses. At the end of it all, if you've won the most money, then you are the champ.

What can I say... Tiger Woods PGA Tour 99 just lacks the ingredients to make golf fun on the PlayStation. It's slow, the putting is ridiculously frustrating, and there's no real reason to play it (read; no incentives). By comparison, Hot Shots Golf may be the MOST fun ever created for the PlayStation, let alone any other system!





DEVELOPED BY VISUAL SCIENCES
PUBLISHED BY PSYGNOSIS
WRITTEN BY ALEX

PS Extreme
SPORTS

PAGE 63

FORMULA 1 98



This year marks the third iteration of the F1 series from Psygnosis. Last year's version, F1 Championship Edition, had some licensing problems which ended up in limited distribution (Doooh!) The original version is still one of my favorite PlayStation games and one that I feel helped establish the PlayStation as the king of the consoles. Granted, F1 racing doesn't have the following here in the good ol' USofA as it does across the pond, but the gameplay in that version was just awesome. Fast forward to 1999 and Psygnosis is ready to release the third in the series. The big news in this latest version is the new development team responsible for bringing it to market. Bizarre creations is no longer associated with this title, Visual Sciences, a Scottish group, is now in charge of the development.



Like the previous versions, the emphasis of this game is on the simulation side, with an arcade version thrown in for good measure. All of the teams, along with their drivers, as well as all of the tracks, are represented as you would expect. Additionally, this year the new developers have thrown in a few new goodies to make sure we all come back for a third time. Camera angles have been greatly enhanced to provide a more TV like presentation. This is primarily done through the replay mode, with new overhead views and a cockpit view with working rear view mirrors.

The gameplay is very similar to the previous two versions, with the majority of the features dedicated to the sim side. Fully animated Pit stops, redesigned cars, intuitive broadcast style presentation and improved physics models on the cars themselves all make up a very realistic representation of one of the worlds most exciting sports. Like last year, an arcade version is included, but you have to wonder why you would bother. The whole idea behind F1 style racing is precision and strategy. Taking your shiny new Ferrari F1 racer and blasting around hair pin turns at 210 mph sort

of defeats the whole purpose. That being said, however, it does make a nice practice session.

This year's game also uses the Dual Shock controller, which is always a bonus, but when using the analog control, you're forced to use both sticks. The left stick controls direction and the right one controls speed. This takes a long time to master and becomes increasingly frustrating over time. If you choose not to use the analog control, then the cars become impossible to steer. It's a no-win situation where you're forced to master a new driving technique.

Graphically, F1 '98 has some issues. The cars are drawn extremely well and the backgrounds finally have some life to them, but the pop-up is out of control. I haven't seen this much pop up since the first generation racers hit the PlayStation. It doesn't have that much of an impact on the overall racing experience, it just makes you wonder what the developers were thinking PlayStation gamers expected out of a third generation game. Rear view mirrors that work are cool, but pop-up should be a thing of the past at this point.



I've looked forward to every F1 game Psygnosis has brought out, including this one. The initial screen shots and PR guide were very promising. Unfortunately, the game didn't deliver on its early promise. It's not a bad game by any stretch of the imagination, it just doesn't stack up well against the likes of Gran Turismo, Need For Speed III and Test Drive 5. Granted, none of these games serve the F1 audience which, in and of itself, will probably feel F1 98 is an adequate purchase. But to the broader audience, F1 98 makes sense as a rental only.



WCW/NWO THUNDER

THQ / Inland Productions / January

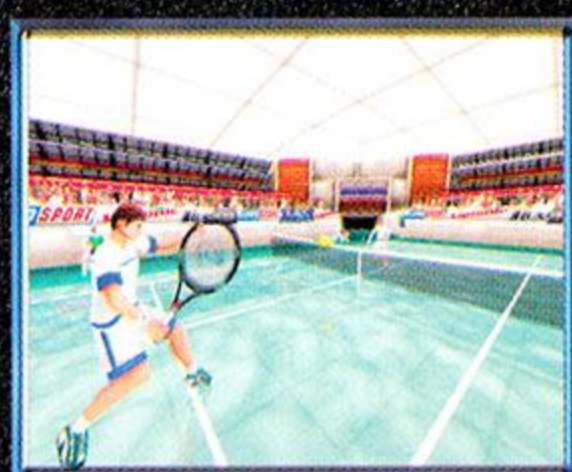


THQ is currently finishing up WCW/NWO Thunder, the exciting new sequel to last year's hit, WCW/NWO Nitro. Those of you that follow the drama-tainment that is WCW know that the Monday Nitro cable TV show is the highest rated cable program, followed closely by Thursday Thunder. In order to stay true to the TV shows, THQ has included a bunch of new features for Thunder — over 60 WCW and NWO wrestlers (including 'tons' of hidden characters), a four player (only two humans, though) Battle Royal mode, real-life wrestler entrances, two-man commentary featuring Tony Schiavone and Mike Tenay, crowds that chant and throw stuff if the "bad guy" is winning, wardrobe editing, a Might Editor that allows you to redistribute strength points to other body parts, WCW/NWO theme music, and lots of different weapons (chairs, bats, etc.). Of course, you can expect to find a complete review from our resident grim wrestling reaper in the next issue of PSExtreme Sports.

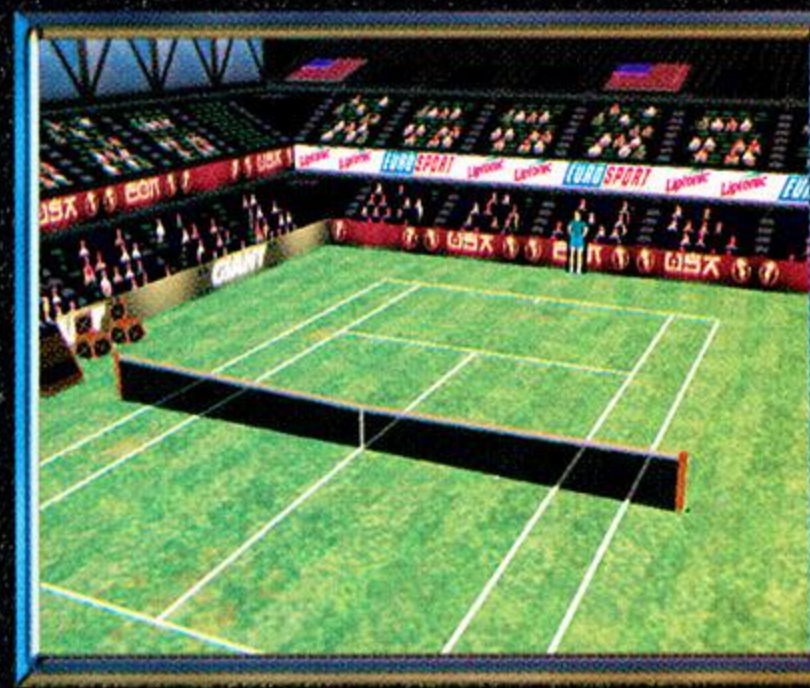
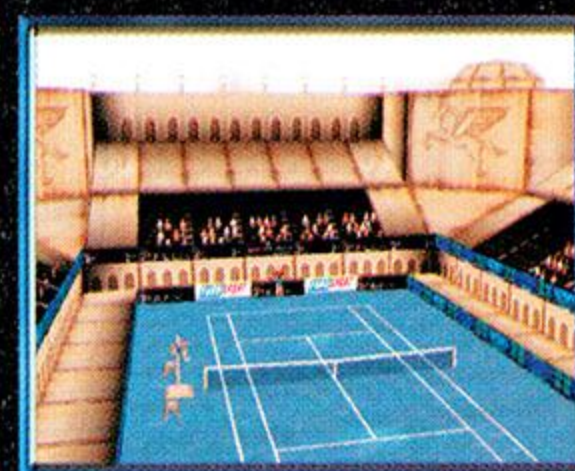


ALL-STAR TENNIS '99

Ubi Soft / Smart Dog / January

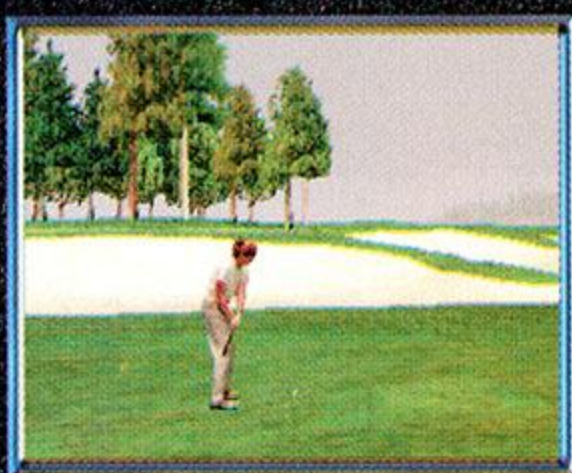


Ubi Soft and Smart Dog have teamed up once again to bring the PlayStation another tennis title. Their first collaboration resulted in the challenging "Tennis Arena", which came out a little more than a year ago. This time around, however, the majority of the players will be real tennis hot shots, including Michael Chang, Jana Novotna, Amanda Coetzer, Jonas Bjorkman, Mark Philippoussis, Conchita Martinez (they left out her ten middle names), Richard Krajicek, and Gustavo Kuerten. While many of these names may not be familiar to Joe Six-Pack, any tennis fan worth their backhand knows of these players. The original Tennis Arena featured all of the playing surfaces (grass, concrete, clay, and limestone — ask Joe), and we can only assume that All-Star Tennis '99 will do the same. You can play singles or doubles matches, from various locations around the globe. We should have more info and a complete review (from Alex "the Tennis Guy" Andrews) in an upcoming issue — stay tuned.

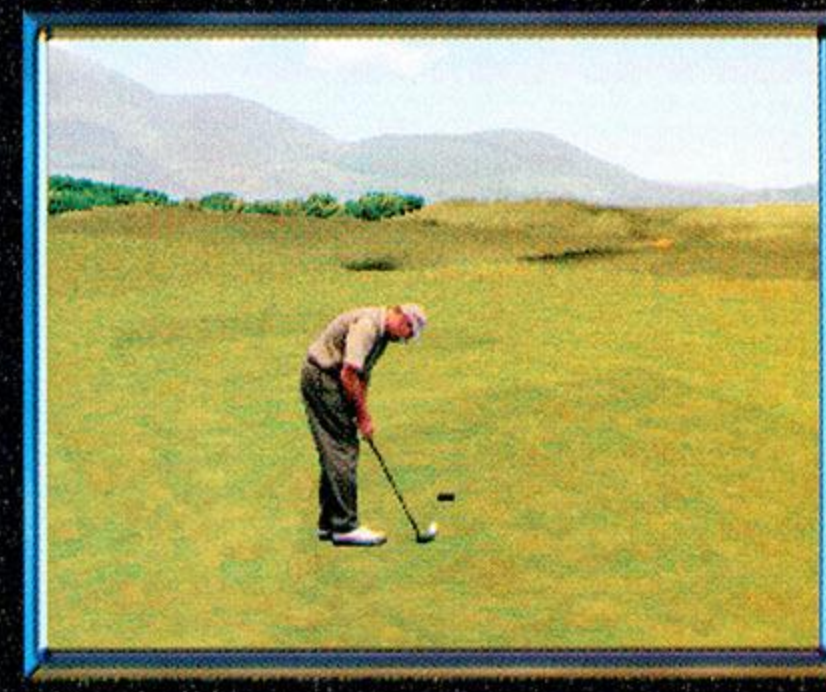


PRO 18: WORLD TOUR GOLF

Psygnosis / Intelligent Games / December



First EA Sports did it, then Interplay, then Sony, then Fox, and now, Psygnosis! What have they all done? They have all published a golf game for the PlayStation — that's what! Of course, Psygnosis joins EA Sports' PGA Tour series by using licensed tour professionals. Pro 18 includes Tom Lehman, Colin (don't call me Monty) Montgomerie, Ian Woosnam, Vijay Singh, Jesper Parnevik, and Mark O'Meara. Psygnosis even invited some of the ladies along, as Laura "Big Hitter" Davies and Dottie Pepper (you'd think there would be a Dr. Pepper endorsement for her) have joined in on the fun. Three courses are included; The Lost City Golf Course (the finest from South Africa), Royal Country Down (N. Ireland), and Coeur d'Arlene Resort Golf Course (the only course in Idaho). Pro 18 also features TV style commentary, a new "Pro Swing" hitting mechanism, and a high level of course detail.



MARCH MADNESS 99

EA Sports / Score Board Productions / January

PREVIEWS **PSExtreme** SPORTS

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March Madness 99 is back for another season, and is chock full of college atmosphere. There are over 60 fight songs that will be played at the appropriate time, by the appropriate schools. Add another 60 or so different chants, and the only thing missing are the mascots! Much like last year, there are over a hundred D1 schools, including over a dozen of the women's programs. You'll also find a dozen or so of the all-time great teams, like the '67 Bruins that featured some skinny kid named Lew. MM 99 also features Conference Championships for those conferences that use them, as well as a CBS Sportsline Poll, and the Naismith and Wooden awards for the player of the year. For those that like to groove while you play, EA has dumped in hip-hop tracks from DJ Q-Bert (does he also have a big nose?), DJ John "Doh" Butler, Nat Bo, Moostack, and Under.



K-1 REVENGE

Jaleco / Daft / January

The original K-1 fighting game was released in the US by THQ, and did remarkably well — it even cracked the Top Ten list for a couple of months. Fast forward a year and a half, and the sequel comes to us by way of Jaleco. K-1 Revenge looks to add more depth and a higher level of gameplay than was found in the original. There are now 15 licensed fighters to choose from, as well as a bunch of hidden fighters. There are now five modes of play; 1 player, versus, tournament, team battle, and a training mode. There are various rinks to fight in, and a move list that would make Tekken 3 envious. The characters are much smoother and more detailed than they used to be, and the sound has been intensified. Fans of kick boxing, and fighting fans in general, should be in for a rousing time when K-1 Revenge comes out early in the first quarter.



CONTENDER

SCEA / Victor Interactive / January

Sony is bringing the PlayStation its first arcade boxing title — Contender. This unique game has over 40 different types of fighters, each with their own whacky look and fighting style. There are two different types of gameplay, the Main Event, and Exhibition boxing. In the Main Event, you'll have to work your way past three divisions (Local, National, and World) in order to make it to the top. Your fighter will gain strength and experience points as he makes his way through the various fighters. Each fighter has his own unique "Special Punch", that is gained at certain levels of the game. Even if you're getting creamed, you can turn the fight around if you can land your Special Punch. The arcade style gameplay is fast and furious, so you'll need to stay alert and be quick with the button whacking. Check out our review in the next issue of PSExtreme Sports.





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"The high resolution graphics will blow you away!" - PSExtreme

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- Killer high resolution graphics mode
- 2-player split-screen racing
- Shortcuts and alternative paths
- Ass kicking soundtrack featuring Fear Factory, Gravity Kills, Junkie XL, KMFDM, and Pitchshifter
- 2-player drag strip racing
- Cop chase mode — you're the cop
- More big crazy jumps, wild cop chases, cross traffic and racing mayhem



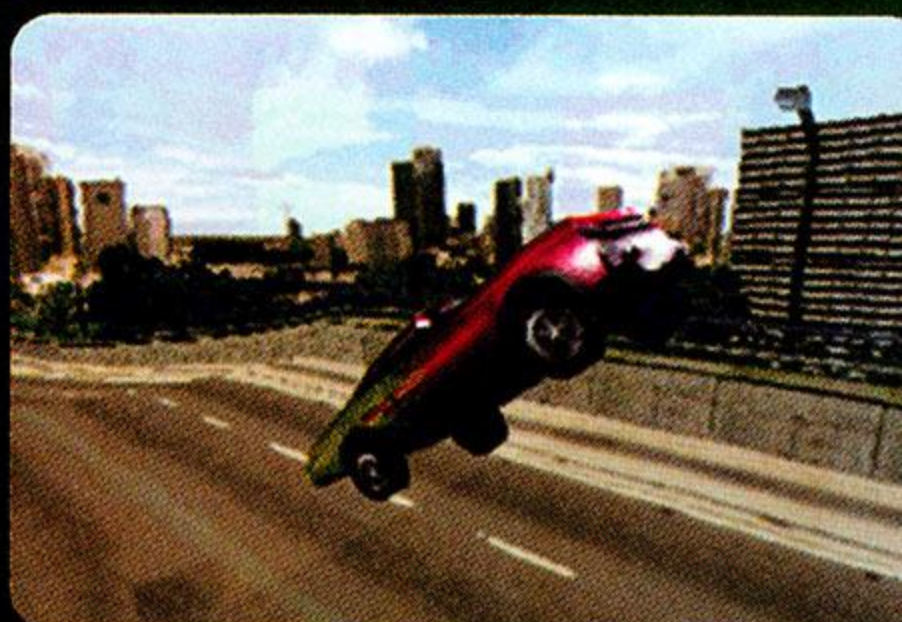
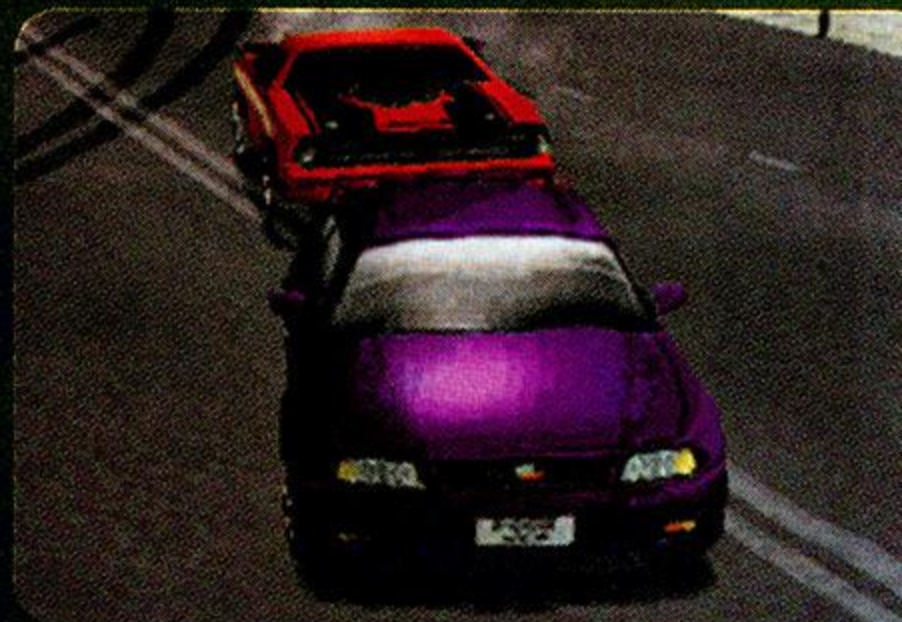
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E

TOMB RAIDER III

PUBLISHED BY EIDOS — DEVELOPED BY CORE

GENRE:
ADVENTURE
AVAILABLE:
NOW

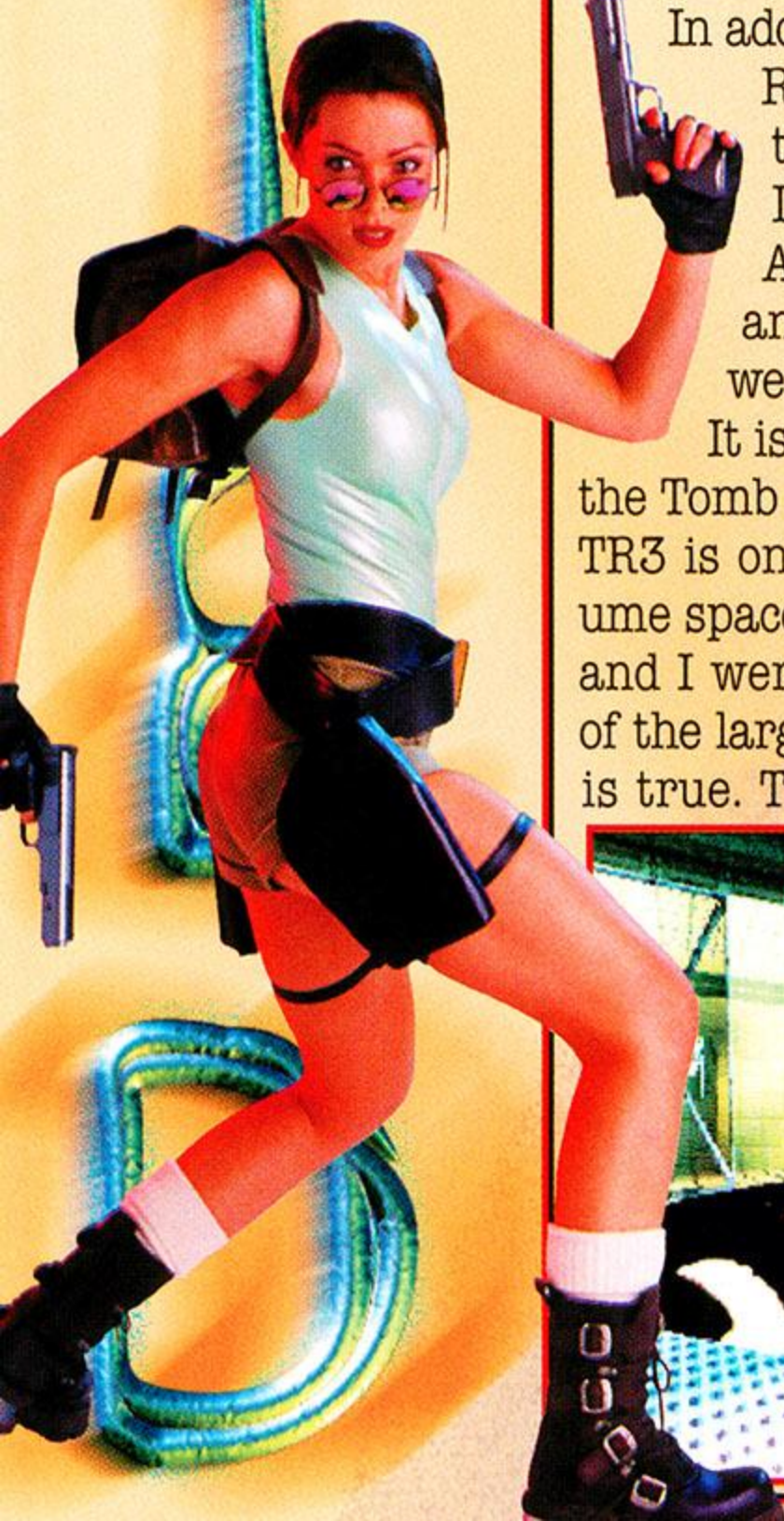
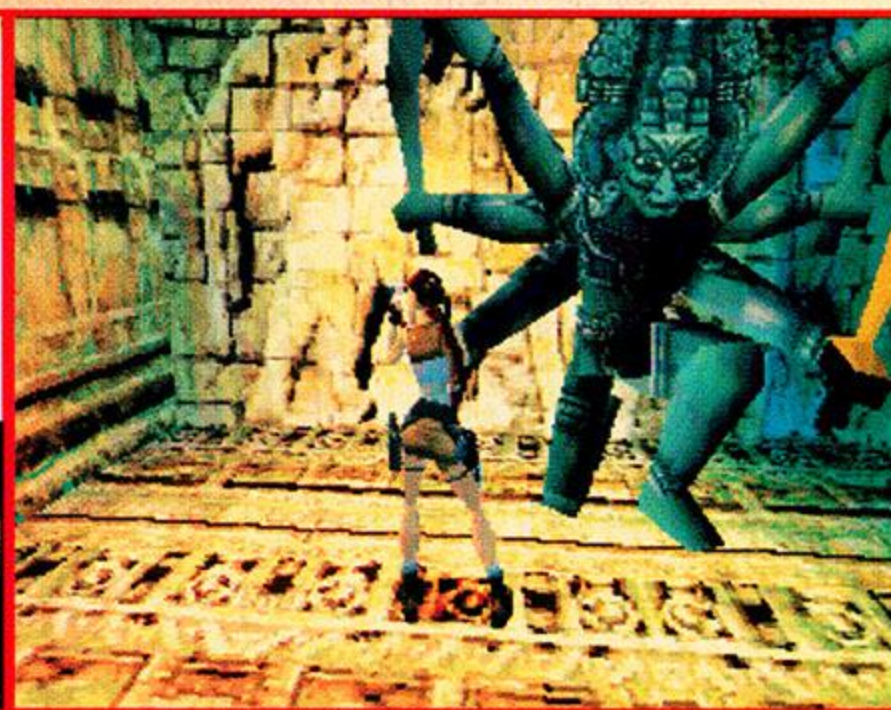
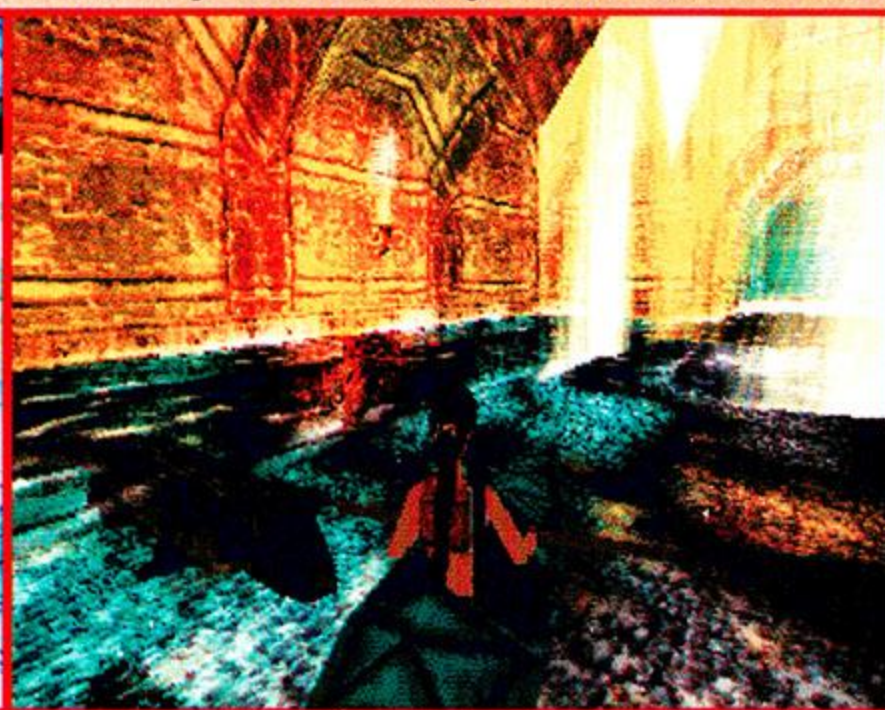
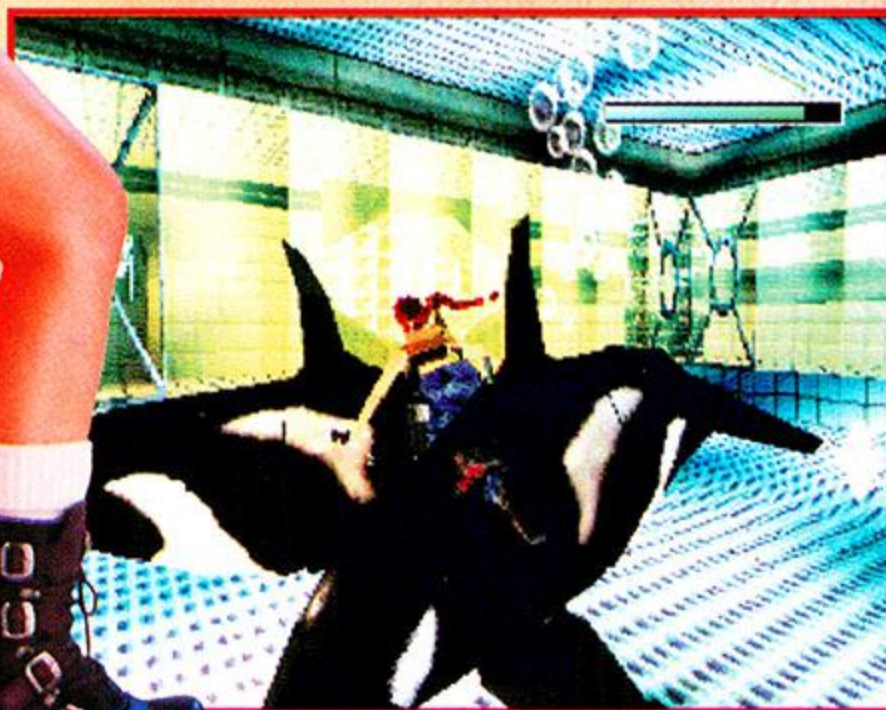
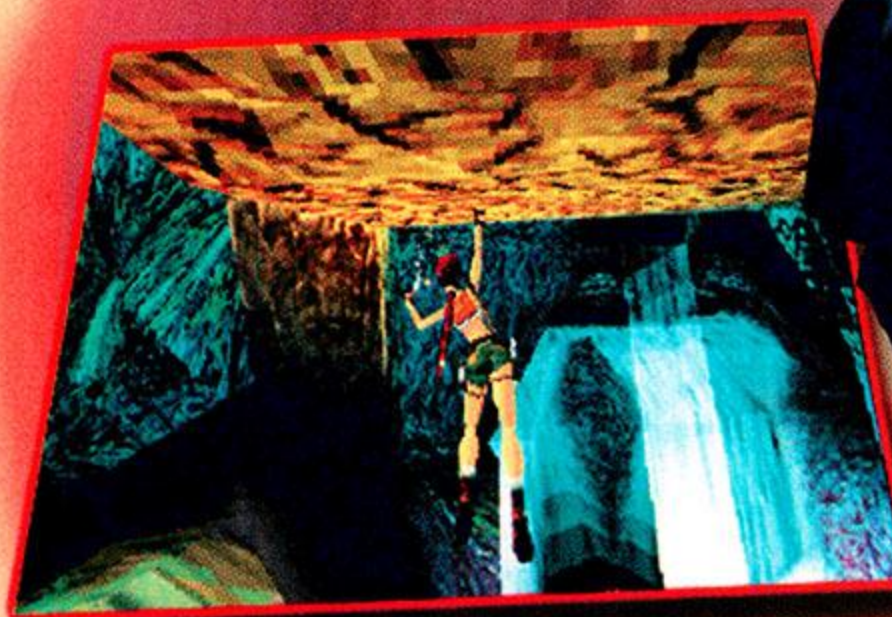
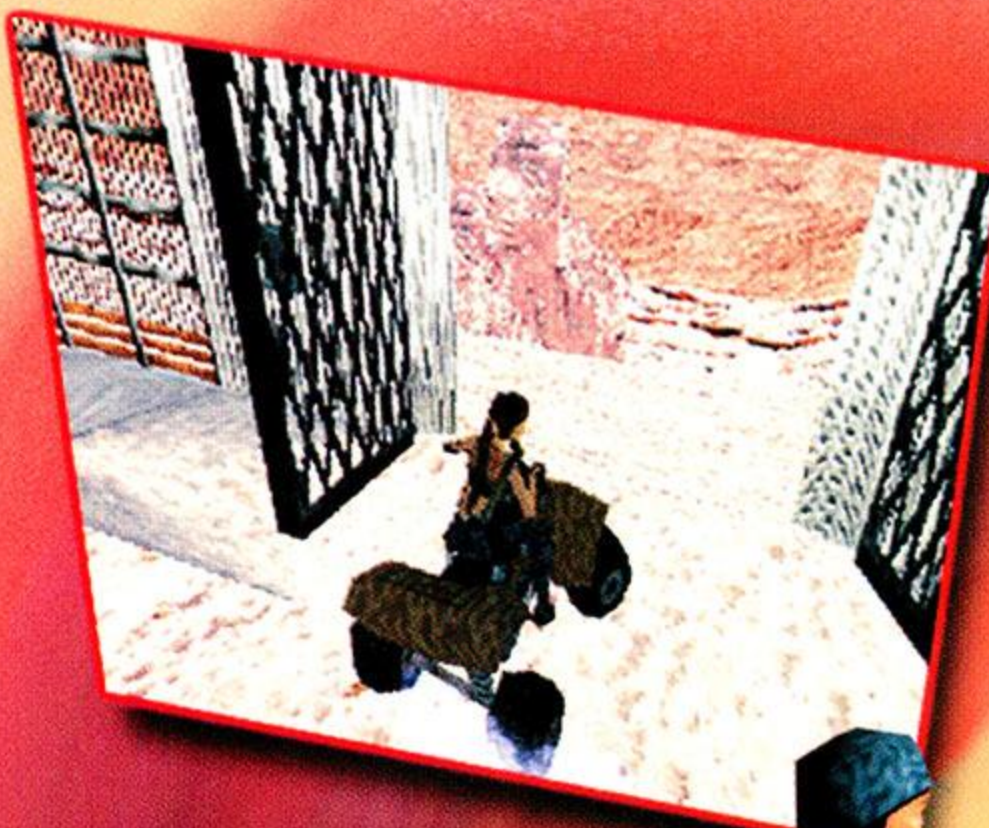

Last week, Greg and I completed Dimension Publishing's "Tomb Raider 3: The Official Strategy Guide." I have been intimately involved with the Tomb Raider series since its inception and feel that I can make the following statement without the need for any qualification: Tomb Raider 3 is the biggest, best and toughest TR yet.

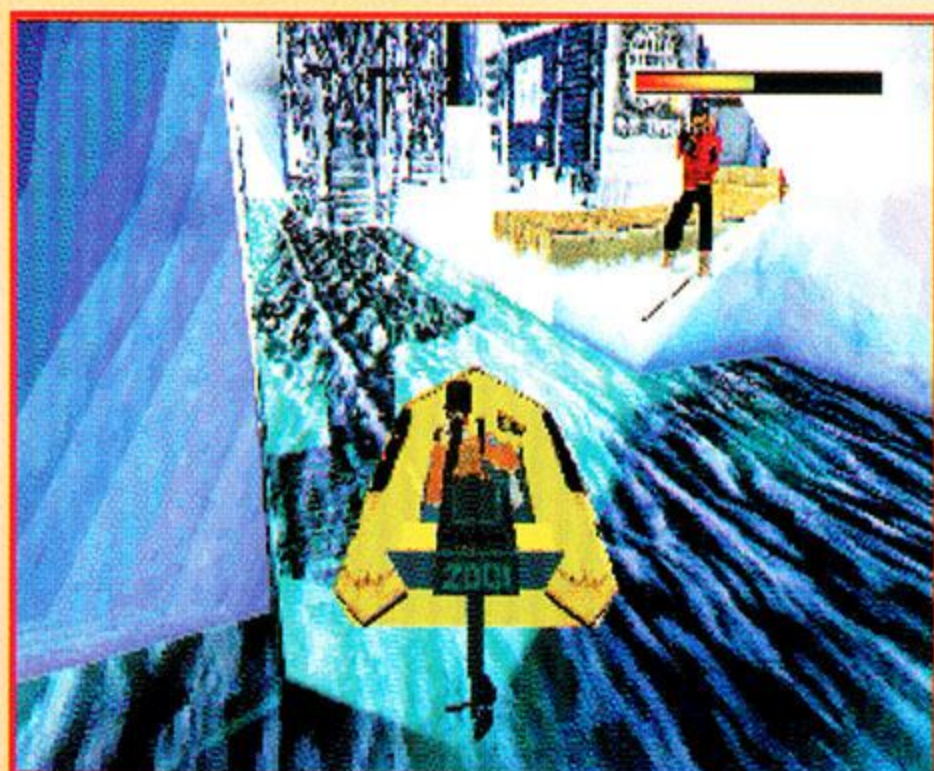
Graphically, the game reaches new heights, with a wide variety of level looks and designs (the London and South Pacific Islands areas being my favorites), a trip into 512 x 240 mode and new, more detailed animation of Lara. There are 20 HUGE (well, most are huge... the four boss levels are much shorter than the regular levels) levels that make use of what seem to be five different tile sets. There are indoor levels, outdoor levels, levels featuring tremendous height changes, underwater action (with the best looking water of the three games), spot lighting effects and more. In other words, it's Tomb Raider.

But, where TR2 opted for more shooting action and less puzzle solving, TR3 gives the player all the puzzles and secrets that he/she can handle... and then some. There are 59 different secret areas/pickups to find in TR3 and, by finding them, you can gain access to the game's bonus level, "All Hallows" (a really cool interior of a cathedral environment). Puzzles involve things like getting gargoyles to breath fire so that they can light up transparent, invisible platforms — giving Lara the ability to reach a switch that she wouldn't otherwise be able to get to, or trapping a robot with a loose electrical wire so that it short-circuits a building's main electrical panel — thus opening protective covers to important switches.

In addition, this year Lara has the ability to drive a Quad Runner through jungles and deserts, a kayak on the rapids of Madubu Gorge (one of the South Pacific Islands levels), a dingy on the frozen water of Antarctica, rappel down wires and across rooftops, crawl and roll, fire a rocket launcher (among a few other new weapons), and grab ceiling surfaces and shimmy across them.

It is, simply put, more of everything that we've come to love in the Tomb Raider series. But, it's not for the weak of heart (or desire). TR3 is one tough game. The levels are just huge — featuring large volume spaces and a number of linked indoor and outdoor spaces. When Greg and I were embroiled in the guide, I made the comment then that any one of the largest levels could be considered a game in and of itself... I still think that is true. TR 3 is a Lara fan's ultimate fantasy (well, maybe not the ULTIMATE



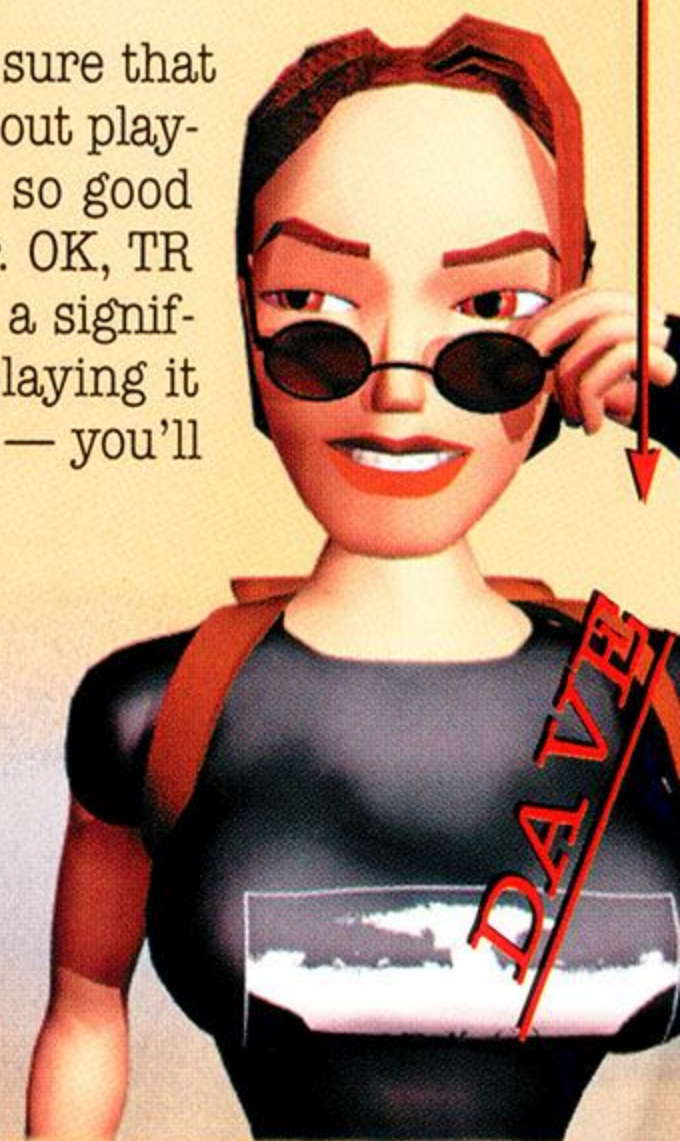
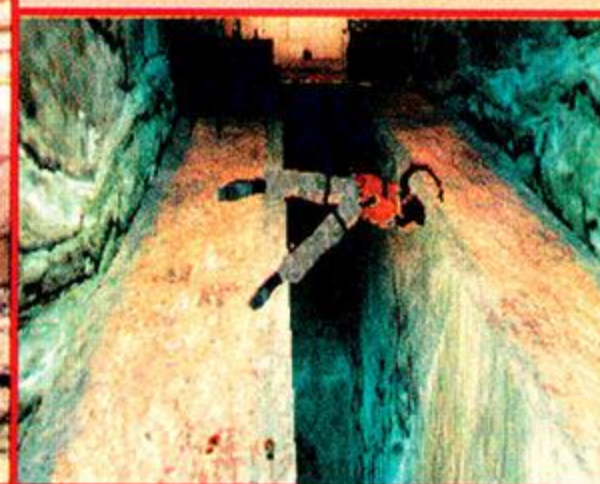


fantasy, but it'll have to do!). There is more gameplay and variety in this game than you might get in any five games combined.

That being said, there also aren't a whole lot of surprises in TR3 for Tomb Raider veterans. Although, I doubt that this revelation surprises anyone. I believe that Core and Eidos have given us exactly what we want... more, bigger, badder Lara and Indiana Jones-style action. Although, for some baffling reason, they have given it to us a little on the dark side. If your TV is like mine, you will want to play the game with the lights off and make sure that Lara has a lot of flares.

How could it get better? Well, I'm glad that I asked that question, because I believe I can answer it! I still think the enemies are stupid. Personally, I've never enjoyed the shooting action in the TR series. With the exception of the T-Rex (he makes his third appearance in the "Crash Site" level), most of the shooting action has been either boring or annoying... or both. My suggestion would be to steal a page from "Goldeneye" and make the enemies more hate-able — where using a scope on a rifle can give you the ability to zoom into his/her/its melon and POP! I think fewer, higher quality enemies is the answer. Also, I would like to see fewer secrets and have them directly tied to the acquisition of a more powerful weapon. If you don't get the secret, you don't get the necessary weapon and you have little chance against the bad guys in the next area/level. Finally, the big one and the idea that I think could indefinitely prolong the series: Focus on micro-worlds instead of macro-worlds. What I mean by this is that I would like to see the next TR focus on a specific region or city — vs. all of the globe trotting that Lara currently does. Something like: "Lara Croft in Tomb Raider 4: Escape from Monte Carlo," where the plot would revolve around well-developed bad guys and their exploits within the city and the seaside community on the French Riviera. The area would be accurately modeled, outdoors and indoors, and would involve specific attacks on Lara when she is checking into the hotel, a secret clue left under her bed, etc. This more focused way of thinking would have the added benefit of allowing for a more "serialized" approach to the character and her adventures — and it wouldn't make it where everybody is sitting around a table going; "Well, we've done the jungle thing, the ice thing, the city thing, how 'bout if we shoot her into space... or another dimension?" None of us want to see "Tomb-raker." It would, in effect, be a better justification for releasing a new TR game every 365 days.

Of course, all of this is simply my wish list and I'm sure that you have one as well. But that's one of the great things about playing an instant classic like Tomb Raider 3, the game is so good that it makes you actually CARE about making it better. OK, TR fans — time to go shopping... but, make sure you allocate a significant amount of time for playing it during your holiday break — you'll need it!



PS EXTREME

THE BOTTOM LINE

98%

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 Player
- Analog Control Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

Of course, all of this is simply my wish list and I'm sure that you have one as well. But that's one of the great things about playing an instant classic like Tomb Raider 3, the game is so good that it makes you actually CARE about making it better. OK, TR fans — time to go shopping... but, make sure you allocate a significant amount of time for playing it during your holiday break — you'll need it!



E

BRIGANDINE

PUBLISHED BY ATLUS — DEVELOPED BY HEARTY ROBIN



Now that we are almost through the barrage of me-too sequels and driving/sports titles, the interesting, more sophisticated strategy titles are starting to peek their heads out from their holiday hiding. Atlus' Brigandine is a game I've been waiting for since I first saw it at the '97 Tokyo game show. With the success of titles like Atlus' own Tactics Ogre and Square's Final Fantasy Tactics, the turn-based strategy genre

has proved itself to be a wanted entity here in the states. Fortunately, Brigandine adds a little twist on the genre, playing like a mixture of Heroes of Might and Magic, Final Fantasy Tactics and Master of Monsters. What the heck does that mean? Well, I'll tell ya...

Set in a war-torn fantasy world, in the year 214, Brigandine teems with deep storyline from the get-go. While this might turn off the casual player, I found it to be a nice set up for the many epic battles that were forthcoming. The playing field is spread over a large island continent, separated into five countries controlled by five Kings and, what do you know? One wants to take over the whole continent. It's your duty to make sure that does not happen. Before starting on your quest to restore order to this newly chaos-infested continent, you must choose your country by picking from four different Kings, each one controlling a different part of the continent and having its own unique storyline and course of events. With the continent being in such turmoil, you'll need to gain alliance from your neighbors and recruit as many new knights as you can get your hands on. Your main fighting force, however, consists of armies of different kinds of creatures. These are mainly acquired by summoning them with mana that you receive for having castles, the more castles you have the more mana you get each turn. Your knights control the monsters and can command a certain number of creatures, depending on their level.

Your Knights and creatures gain experience and go up levels, learning new techniques and magics. A neat feature of Brigandine is sending your knights out on quests. When a knight is sent out on a quest he (or she) has the chance to find things like special new creatures, items or equipment. Now, if Brigandine sounds confusing or time consuming, it really isn't. Basically, the game is a spiderweb of castles and you move your knights around taking out as many enemy castles as you can, while making sure your allies are holding their own.

With only this small column of space here to tell you about this game, it's hard to convey how much I enjoy playing Brigandine. The large array of 3D creatures are really a sight to see. I must say that I can't wait to go home and finish my saved game. If you're a fan of tactic type games and are ready for a challenge, pick up Brigandine. You won't be disappointed.

GENRE:
TURN-BASED STRATEGY
AVAILABLE:
NOW



**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**

88%

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player



SHAGGY

DARKSTALKERS 3

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY CAPCOM

I've always felt that the Darkstalkers/Night Warriors series has been one of Capcom's greatest, most under-appreciated series of fighting games. For some reason, the series has never generated the same fervor in the US that it did in Japan — which is surprising, considering that it was initially designed to be more appealing to State-side gamers than the Japanese. The first game did fair-to-middling when released, Night Warriors never received an official release in the US and the latest, Darkstalkers 3, was another arcade under-achiever. Hopefully, fighting game fans will be able to see past the lack of a strong arcade heritage and enjoy this excellent translation.



Darkstalkers 3 is the best Capcom PlayStation conversion to date. Capcom has done an excellent job reducing the graphics to fit within the limited PSX video memory, while keeping the key frames of animation intact. Is it a perfect arcade translation? Hardly. Is it just about the best you can expect from Sony's magic grey box? Yes, indeed.

Three versions into the series and the game has grown quite complex. There's a depth to the engine that is easy to miss, but quite surprising once you get into it. There are a number of different blocks, guard cancels, reversals, and specials that require some serious studying to master. Once you learn these moves, however, the game opens up and you'll become a serious threat to other players. At the same time, it's possible to become a good player without ever discovering the deeper levels of the game.

The Darkstalkers series has always had a very natural combo system. Unlike most fighting games, where combos are long, complicated strings of commands, Darkstalkers 3 combos are smooth and easy to grasp. Each move flows into the next and deep combos become instinctual rather than learned. The basic combo system works by moving from light to medium to heavy attacks (or vice-versa), switching between punches and kicks as you go. Longer combos will incorporate special moves and attacks as well, but there's no sense of being trapped by unbreakable combos.

Over the years, there have been quite a few characters added to the Darkstalkers universe. The current count is up to 18 with the addition of the four new characters. Capcom seems to be running low on creative ideas for the new characters; Lilith is Morrigan's sister and has a nearly identical cadre of moves, Baby BonnieHood is a gun totin' Red Riding Hood, the new big boss Jedah is sort of a combo of Dimitri and Pyron and Q-Bee the bee girl is just... strange. Each character does have a good amount of moves and specials, based around typical Street Fighter commands, so there is a lot to learn for each character.

Anyone who was burned by the crappy version of the first Darkstalkers has nothing to worry about with this game. Much more care has been put into D3, making the experience a great deal more enjoyable than the first. It's been a few years since Playstation owners have been able to play a Darkstalkers title and we're glad to see the return of the series with style. Darkstalkers 3 has the traditional array of extra modes, including Training, an art collection screen and the new Original Character mode, which allows you to re-name your character and mess around with the sprite's colors. Darkstalkers 3 is a solid game for fans of 2D fighters.

GENRE:
FIGHTING
AVAILABLE:
NOW



**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**

90%

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2
Players

Vibration Function
Compatible

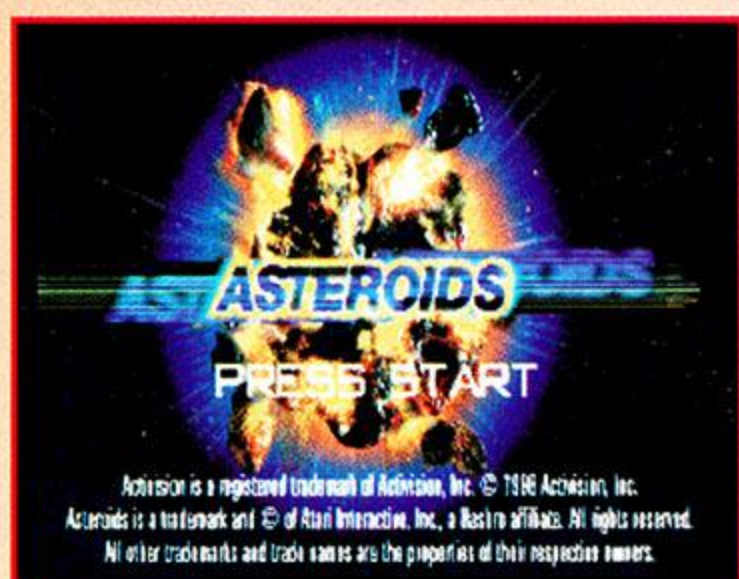


CHRIS

ASTEROIDS

PUBLISHED BY ACTIVISION — DEVELOPED BY SYROX

GENRE:
SHOOTER
AVAILABLE:
NOW



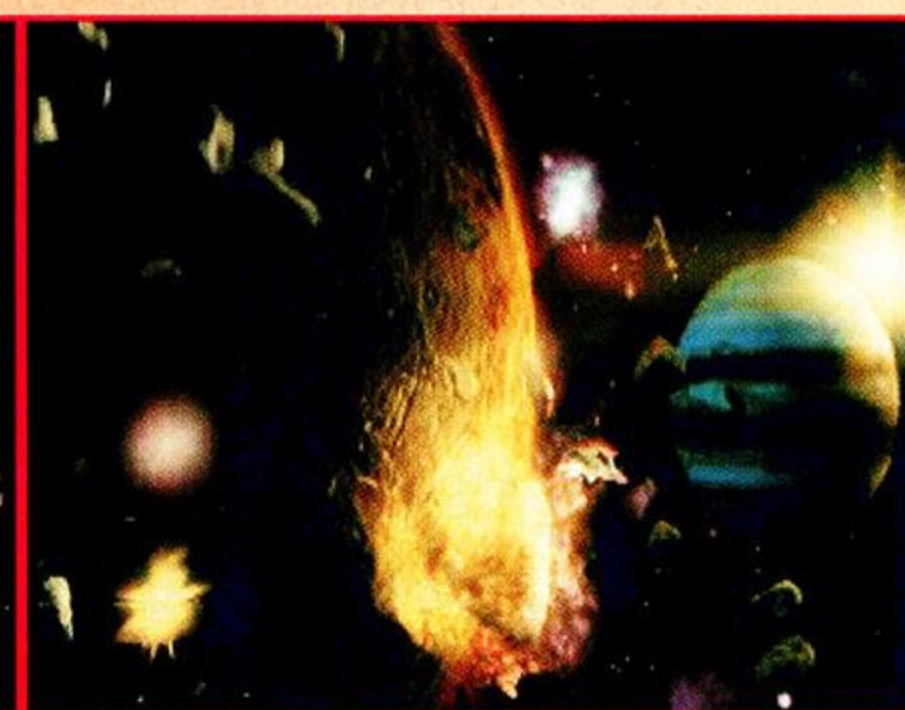
When you consider some of the PlayStation titles currently or soon to be found on store shelves — Frogger, Pitfall, Centipede, Space Invaders—you might wonder whether the year is 1998 or 1982. Like great movies or novels, some classic videogames never die. Unlike movies or novels, however, videogames have to be reprogrammed from scratch every time a new system is released. This

gives the programmers the power to change the original, but there is a fine line to walk when remaking a classic. If the new game is too similar, it's just a retread that makes no new contribution. If the new game is too different, it risks losing whatever it was that made the original a classic in the first place.

What was it about the original Asteroids that made it so great? In my opinion, its success was based upon three factors—the danger from all sides, the hypnotic effect of the spinning asteroids combined with the sound effects, and the simple goal of shooting everything in sight. Any remake ought to contain those elements. Fortunately, Activision's new Asteroids game retains the feel of the original. Perhaps too well.

As you might expect, the graphics have been updated. The spaceships, asteroids, satellites and other debris are rendered in 3D and the backgrounds contain colorful elements; such as a black hole, a sun with solar flares, a giant worms (!) and the Earth's atmosphere. Explosions and weapons take full advantage of the PlayStation's capabilities, and the sound effects have much more depth. In a nice homage, the laser fire of your spaceship sounds just like the original. Background music is also featured, but it is subdued enough to add to, not detract from, the pace of the game.

So what else is new? Well, there are now mission briefings and CGI cut scenes in between levels that provide a bit of a backstory, but let's face it — this isn't Colony Wars! Your mission remains "shooting things until they blow up." There is a two player simultaneous game in which you compete for points. There is also a hidden version of the coin-op game that plays somewhat faster than the original. (If you want a perfect version, check out Midway's Arcade's Greatest Hits: Atari 1.) Along with your regular laser, you can collect power ups which include weapons such as a ramming shield, laser, smart bombs, and plasma sword. These new weapons add to the fun and are a must for destroying some of the tougher debris and enemies. There are three levels of difficulty, and you can continue three times before the game ends.





If you were expecting a first-person or third-person 3D perspective, as I initially was, you're out of luck. This is no Blasteroids. Like the original, the gameplay takes place on a single screen which "wraps around" so that asteroids, ships, and fired shots travel off one edge of the screen and appear from another.

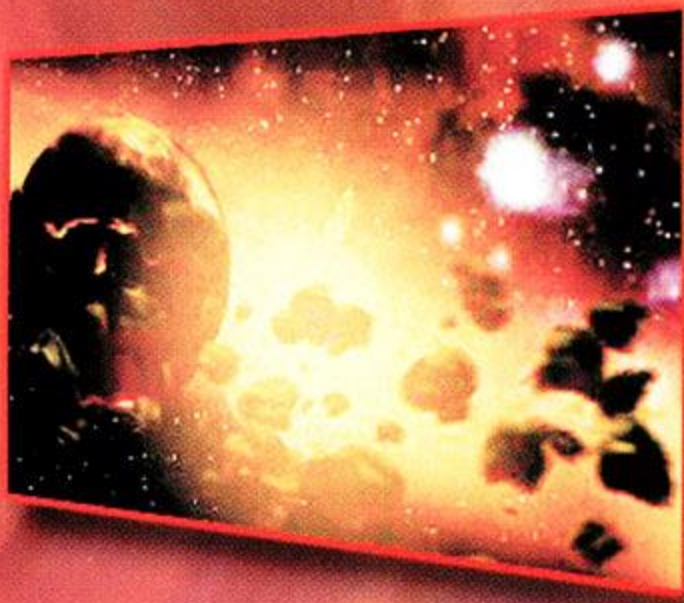
Aside from the lack of a new perspective, I do have a few complaints (as usual). The dark graphics make the smallest asteroids hard to see. In addition, the wide variety of flotsam and jetsam make quick identification difficult. In the original, you shot everything. Here, you must distinguish between indestructible asteroids, asteroids which absorb shots and fire back, crystalline objects which regenerate if not destroyed fast enough, and several different satellites and enemy ships. It can get quite confusing (and quite crowded)!

Another criticism concerns the fact that, at the end of every level, your ship is pulled into a wormhole and then deposited at the center of the screen before the next level starts. If you are a fan of the original, as I am, you'll remember the danger of destroying the last asteroid while your ship was near the edges of the screen. If you did so, you had to thrust towards the center as quickly as possible before the next wave of asteroids began. Here, you can almost be as reckless as you want in going after the final asteroid.

I did enjoy the various colorful and interactive backgrounds, as opposed to the dark space of the original. Depending on the level, there are potential hazards from the backgrounds themselves which must also be avoided along with the asteroids (I'm no scientist, but I did wonder why the black hole pulled my ship towards itself but had no effect on my shots or on the asteroids).

I really don't have any other criticism of the game as it is, although I do want to comment upon what it could have been. I don't understand why the game is limited to just two players. Since the game takes place entirely on a single playfield, this would be a perfect four player contest with no need for split screens. Even if there wasn't enough computing power to handle four independently moving ships, as well as the flotsam and jetsam in space, which I doubt, I still don't see why a "versus" mode could not have been included between just two ships (a la Space War). Or, perhaps a competitive mode where the two spaceships are joined together at the rear (a la Space Duel). Even the Atari 7800 version of Asteroids from 10 years ago allowed two players to kill each other but, in this version, shots can't hit other players nor can your ships collide.

If you are looking for a huge change from the original, you may be disappointed. The game is more of a remake than a sequel — in other words, it does exactly what the first one did with only a few improvements such as different types of debris, weapons power-ups, music, and backgrounds with hazards. It looks great, and is an enjoyable game, but it isn't original and it isn't very deep. If you are a fan of arcade-style shooting games, or if you are a huge fan of the original, you ought to give this updated version a try.



MARK

PS THE BOTTOM LINE EXTREME

85%

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players
Vibration Function Compatible

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EXTRA RATTLES TWISTED METAL 3

PUBLISHED BY 989 STUDIOS — DEVELOPED BY IDOL MINDS



The original Twisted Metal introduced the car combat genre to the PlayStation. While it was not impressive looking, it had action, great weapons, and interesting character/vehicle designs. The sequel gave us the same so-so graphics, better levels, and a new advanced attack system similar to those found in fighting games. SingleTrac, the original developer, moved on shortly thereafter. Now, after a

year without a new Twisted Metal game on the shelves, the series has returned in the hands of 989 Studios. This time, however, it has competition in Activision's Vigilante 8 and SingleTrac's own Rogue Trip.

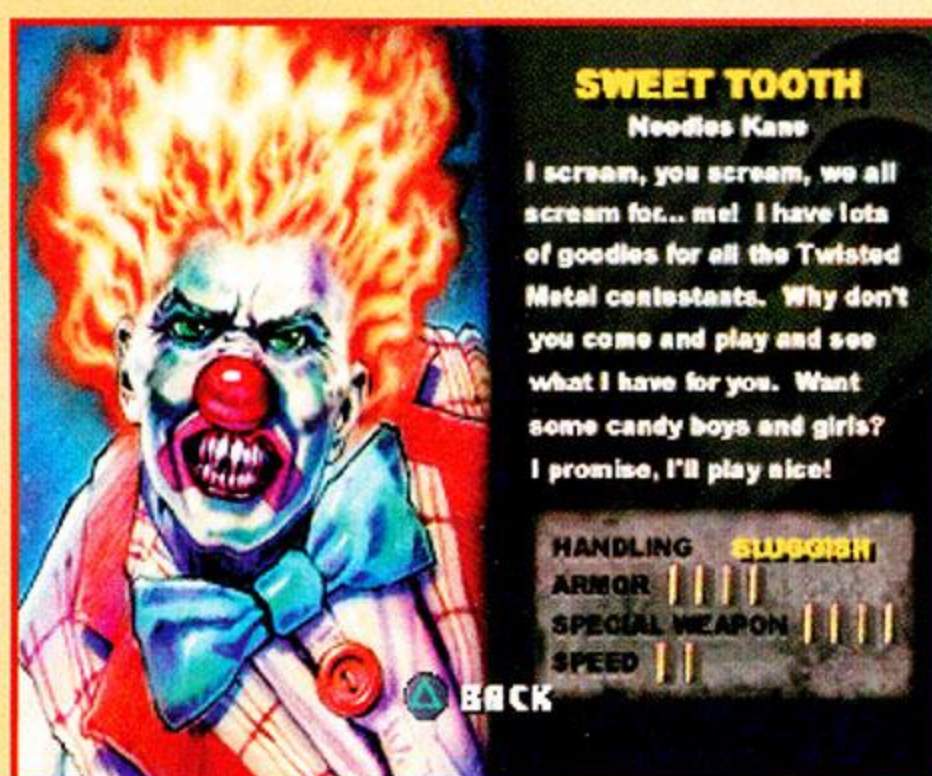
What's new and improved? For starters, the frame rate is much faster and there is virtually no slow down. The clipping problems prevalent in the first two games are not noticeable. The graphics have also received a much-needed facelift, although they are still not in the same league as Vigilante 8. With the improved graphics, I expected more interaction with the landscapes but this is not the case. While most structures can be destroyed, wrecking them does not affect the game (unlike the Eiffel Tower in TM 2, for example). The new locales include Hollywood, Washington D.C., Hangar 18, The North Pole, London, Tokyo, Egypt, and Calypso's Blimp. Although each area contains "warp" bubbles to move you back and forth, none of the levels are very memorable. There are few secrets, most of which are easy to uncover.

The main change in Twisted Metal 3 has to do with the game's physics. I'm almost positive that TM3 is built upon the Rally Cross engine which, while fine for off-road racing, doesn't really lend itself to combat. The controls are very sensitive — the slightest movement causes the car to veer, making it quite hard to stay lined up with an enemy. You can't perform any tight turns or 360° moves either, so you had better practice your "Y" turns! The vehicles bounce around more than they should and flip over easily. Fortunately, you don't need to rock your car back and forth to right it, but it looks odd when the computer "erases" a vehicle and then "redraws" it right side up.

TM3 still lacks a memory card save feature, which is annoying if you don't like the default controller settings and need to change them every time you play. Some of TM2's advanced attacks are still here— such as freeze, rear attack, and jump. I have always believed that these attacks interrupt the flow of the game since you need to use the same buttons to drive. TM3 is actually worse in this department. I found myself unintentionally jumping when I was

GENRE:
CAR COMBAT
AVAILABLE:
NOW





just trying to maneuver. Analog control and dual shock are supported, a first for the TM series, but the digital control works a lot better because of the many buttons required to play.

The seven "standard" characters that appeared in both TM and TM2 have returned, but some vehicles have been redesigned and some of their special weapons are different. Apparently, the five new characters from TM2 weren't very popular since only one—Axel—returns for this game. The four brand new characters aren't that interesting, and none of their special weapons stand out. Speaking of which, the distinctive sounds of each vehicle's special weapon always let you know who was attacking in the first two games. These sounds are much more subdued here. You aren't even told which enemies have been randomly selected as opponents before entering a location! My final complaint is that health and weapon power-ups seem too plentiful, resulting in battles which take far too long. As with the last game, there are sub-bosses you have to defeat before reaching the final boss.

Twisted Metal 3 offers an "unofficial" link cable option so that 3 or 4 players can compete. The regular two-player simultaneous option still allows you to select from a horizontally or vertically split screen. The multiplayer mode is much quicker than in prior versions, and you can battle up to 6 CPU-controlled vehicles. Another new option is the ability to choose a CPU car as an ally and pool your lives together against the other characters.

989 Studios has done a fine job of improving the graphics and increasing the frame rate, yet in doing so they have somehow removed much of the original's gritty appeal. The colorful and cartoon-like CGI intro should have been a giveaway. Almost every level takes place in a brightly lit environment, and all the pedestrians have been removed. Granted, TM 2 also had daytime levels, but I still prefer the dark city streets from the original game. There also doesn't seem to be as much screaming, aside from the vocals of Rob Zombie's soundtrack that is. Perhaps I speak for the minority, but I dislike the move away from musical scores and towards heavy metal music with lyrics. While the music still fits the mood, I prefer the eerie sounds and familiar music (sans vocals) from the original two games.

Fans of the car combat genre face a real dilemma. Rogue Trip has the humor and dark edge, but the graphics are so-so and the Twisted Metal characters could not be used. The "tourist courier" element of that game also detracts from the combat. Vigilante 8 looks spectacular and has great interactive levels, but it just doesn't convey the same feeling of mayhem. The game that bears the Twisted Metal name looks better and plays faster than its predecessors, but fails to add anything new and exciting. The physics engine, with rollovers and lots of bouncing, doesn't seem right for this type of game. You spend more time trying to turn your car than chasing opponents. When you add uninteresting new characters and uninspiring levels, the overall effect is "Twisted Metal Lite." While it is certainly not a bad game, it doesn't quite live up to the reputation of the name.

Fans of the first two Twisted Metal games are bound to be disappointed.



PS EXTREME

THE BOTTOM LINE

00%

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 or 2 Players
- Analog Control Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

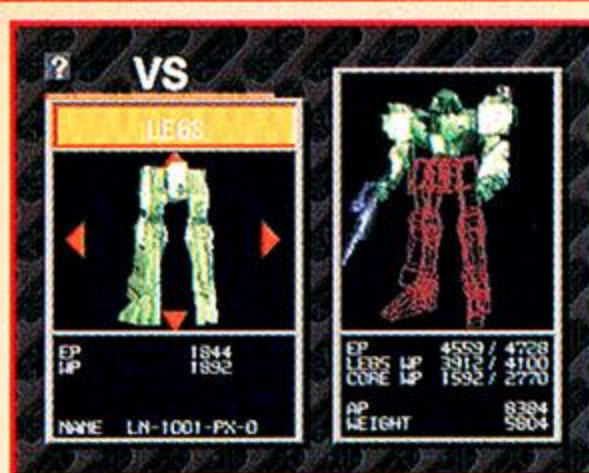
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ARMORED CORE: PROJECT PHANTASMA

PUBLISHED BY ASCII ENTERTAINMENT — DEVELOPED BY FROM SOFTWARE

GENRE:
ACTION SHOOTER
AVAILABLE:
NOW



Take one part Robotech and one part Mission Impossible and you end up with ASCII's Armored Core: Project Phantasma. As the sequel to last year's Sony release, AC:PP does a great job of picking up where the original left off. And, actually, not much as changed. There are some new gameplay options and all that, but the style remains all Armored Core.

The basic gist of the game goes like this — you, a member of a group of mercenaries called the Ravens, are commissioned to infiltrate an underground complex. Each time one of the 17 missions is completed, credits are earned and your AC can be upgraded. Not only that, but along the way you'll find some pretty cool parts that will kick some major butt. The missions are definitely no cakewalk either, they have a nice variety — ranging from straight destruction to protecting civilians — and AC:PP also features an Arena Mode that pits you at the bottom of a 50 AC ladder. This is the simplest way to earn credits and where most of the sweet upgrades can be acquired.

Graphically, the game is average. The engine is exactly the same as the original and, hence, seems a little outdated, but even still, it is about on par with most of the titles coming out today. The music and sounds are surprisingly well-done, with a killer, high energy techno-industrial soundtrack. Along the same lines, the voice-overs, though mostly messages heard through the AC com unit, are perfectly executed.

The controls are decent, remaining exactly the same as the first. If you haven't piloted an AC yet, it takes about a half an hour to get used to looking up/down, as they are mapped to the shoulder buttons. Unfortunately, there is no analog support, only the D-pad can be used, but the Dual Shock's vibration function has been implemented so when you get hit, you know.

One of the greatest things about Armored Core (and the part that really adds to the replay value) is the multi-player combat. There are ten completely different stages to choose from and playing via the PlayStation's link cable is hours of pure metal flyin', AC bustin', shootin' and groovin' fun. Two players can also play via split screen, which, while not as cool as linked, is still very intense.

Where the game loses points is its depth. After playing the first AC for a couple of weeks, AC:PP can be completed in about half the time. This is mostly due to the drop-off in missions, although the Arena does make up for the lack of missions. Fortunately, I am a big deathmatch player, so having to work my way up the 50 AC ladder in one-on-one style shoot-outs was a really great addition to the game. And for fans of the first Armored Core, AC:PP uploads info from the memory card and allows you to use your original AC and credits! That, I must say, is an awesome feature!

For fans of the original, Armored Core: Project Phantasma is definitely a must. The ability to upload your AC and the new Arena Mode make for a worthy successor. For first time Armored Core players, if you like one-on-one style fighting, this will feed your need and provide some particularly challenging missions.



**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**

83%

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2
Players

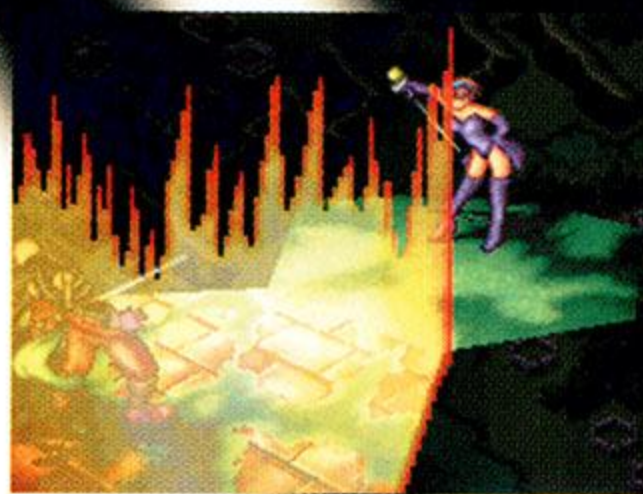
Vibration Function
Compatible



DILLION



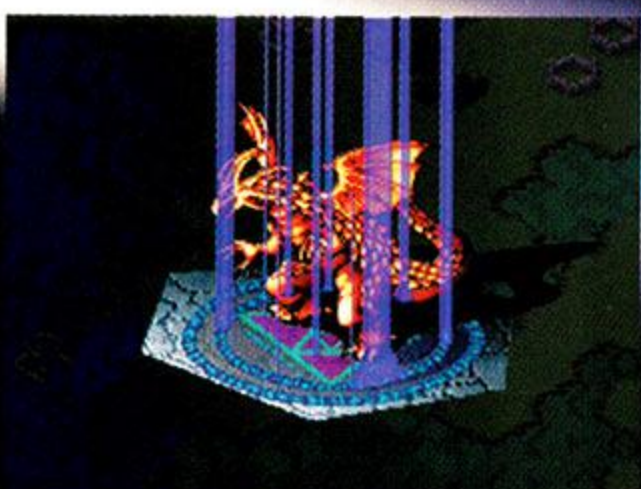
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RUG RATS

PUBLISHED BY THQ — DEVELOPED BY n-SPACE

GENRE:
PUZZLE ADVENTURE
AVAILABLE:
DECEMBER



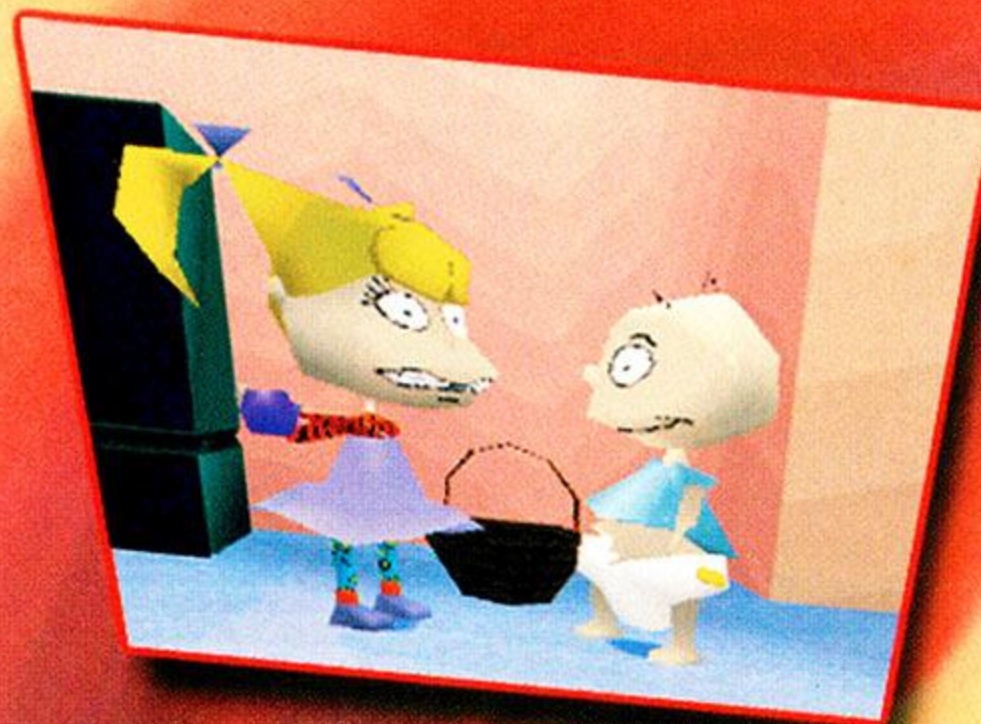
OK, unless you're under the age of eight, or have kids at home that fall into that category, you probably haven't paid a lot of attention to the progress of THQ's latest title, Rug Rats, or as my favorite five year old says "lug lats"! As "gaming professionals", however, we can't ignore the title, and as such, have this informative review for your perusal. In case you missed the games profile in earlier issues of PSExtreme, I'll start

with a little background.

Rug Rats: Search for Reptar is a go anywhere(almost) third person, action/adventure title that uses the characters from the phenomenally popular TV series of the same name. Much like Mario for the N64, Rug Rats' main objective is to lure the younger gamer into the ever expanding PlayStation market. Using themes based on actual cartoon episodes, you'll have your choice of any of the series' characters to explore the lush 3d worlds in an all out search for Reptar (one of the cartoon series' main villains). There are twenty levels to explore, all offering challenging puzzles (for an eight year old) and a variety of gameplay elements.

Since this game was developed almost primarily for the youngest segment of the PlayStation audience, my review will reflect those particular standards and not that of the psycho gamer looking for the next big thing! First off, regardless of any other attribute, the game is a perfect fit for the intended audience. It's almost an introduction to video gaming. The camera angles follow you very closely and never let you get lost. The required puzzles will always reward you if you just give them a little attention and, if the intended gamer is at all familiar with the TV series, he/she will have a leg up on the game already. The graphics are crisp and somewhat usefully sparse. There is no needless clutter for the youngster to get lost in. Although the game is presented in a non-linear format, even the youngest gamer will find it easy to get around, whether they have any success with the puzzles or not. The music, cut scenes and character voices are right out of the cartoon series and add quite a bit to the overall feeling of the game. You do get a sense that you're participating in an actual cartoon episode.

Although I've tried to address this game from an eight year old's perspective (something that anyone who knows me would say is not too difficult), I can't ignore some of the games more glaring flaws. First off, while it may have 20 levels, they're awful short. If you've played any video game before, you'll be able to master this one in no time at all. The difficulty level is low, even for an eight year old. If it wasn't for its cartoon pedigree, the replay value would be non-existent. Given the intended market, however, you can expect your eight year old to come back to Rug Rats: Search for Reptar for quite some time. While certainly not for everybody, RR:SFR does its intended job well and won't disappoint anyone who enjoys the TV series.



**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**

90%

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2
Players

Vibration Function
Compatible

**GOLD
X**

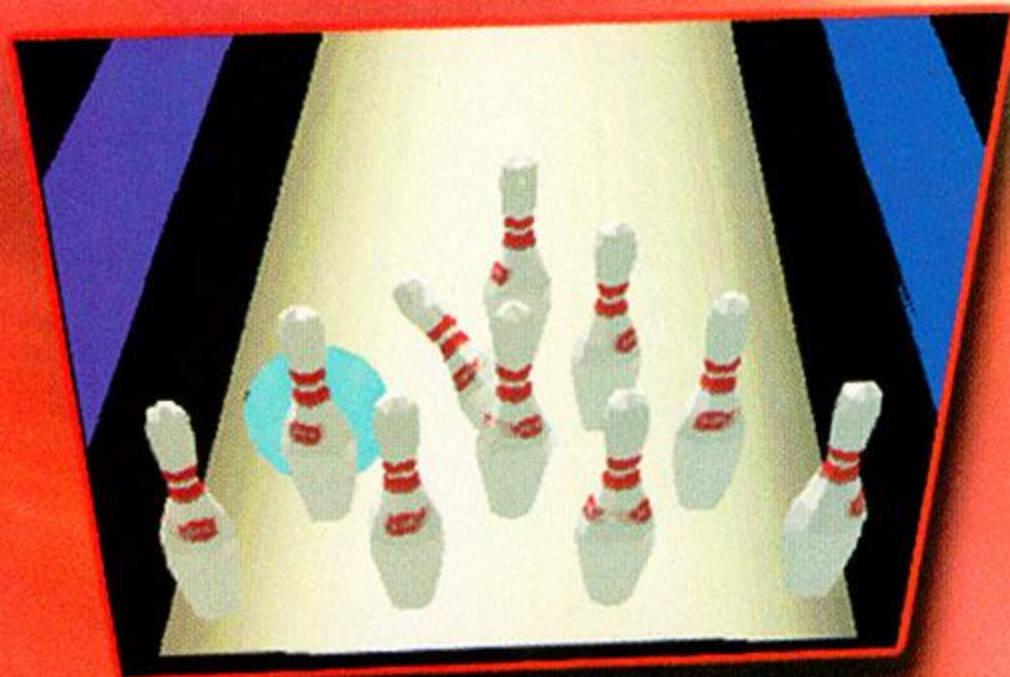
ALEX

ANIMANIACS: TEN PIN ALLEY

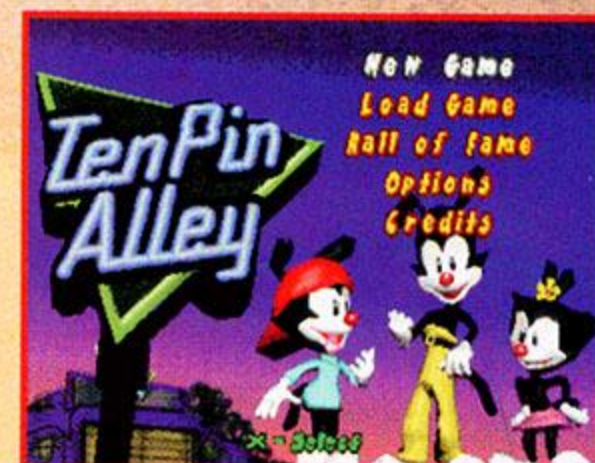
PUBLISHED BY ASC GAMES — DEVELOPED BY SAFFIRE

When I first learned of this title, I immediately thought "Why?" There are already two very good bowling games available for the PlayStation (but still no miniature golf—a travesty!). Is another one necessary? Judging from the license, the intent was apparently to make a more "kid friendly" game. I, therefore, expected the game to be a slightly-modified version of Ten Pin Alley, which it is. Unfortunately, it is nowhere near as enjoyable as the original.

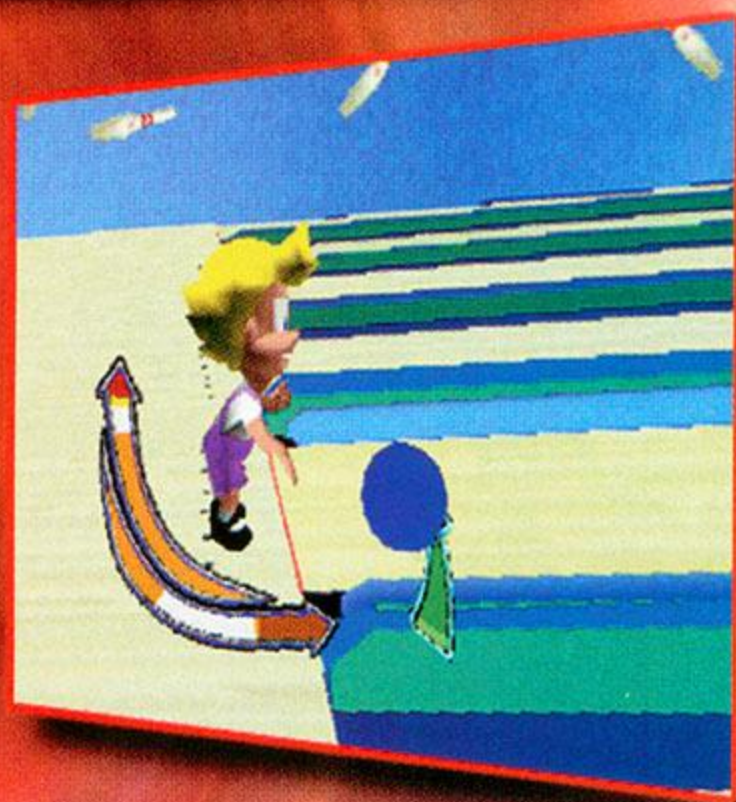
GENRE:
CARTOON BOWLING
AVAILABLE:
DECEMBER



First, let me describe the features. You can play as one of 10 Animaniacs characters with four levels of difficulty to choose from—Kid, Rookie, Journeyman and Pin King. On the lowest level, you no longer have to use the power and accuracy meters to throw the ball. Lane bumpers can also be turned on and off at the lower skill levels to prevent gutter balls. You can play in tournament, as a team, or solo with either standard or no tap (i.e., 9 pins down counts as a strike) scoring.



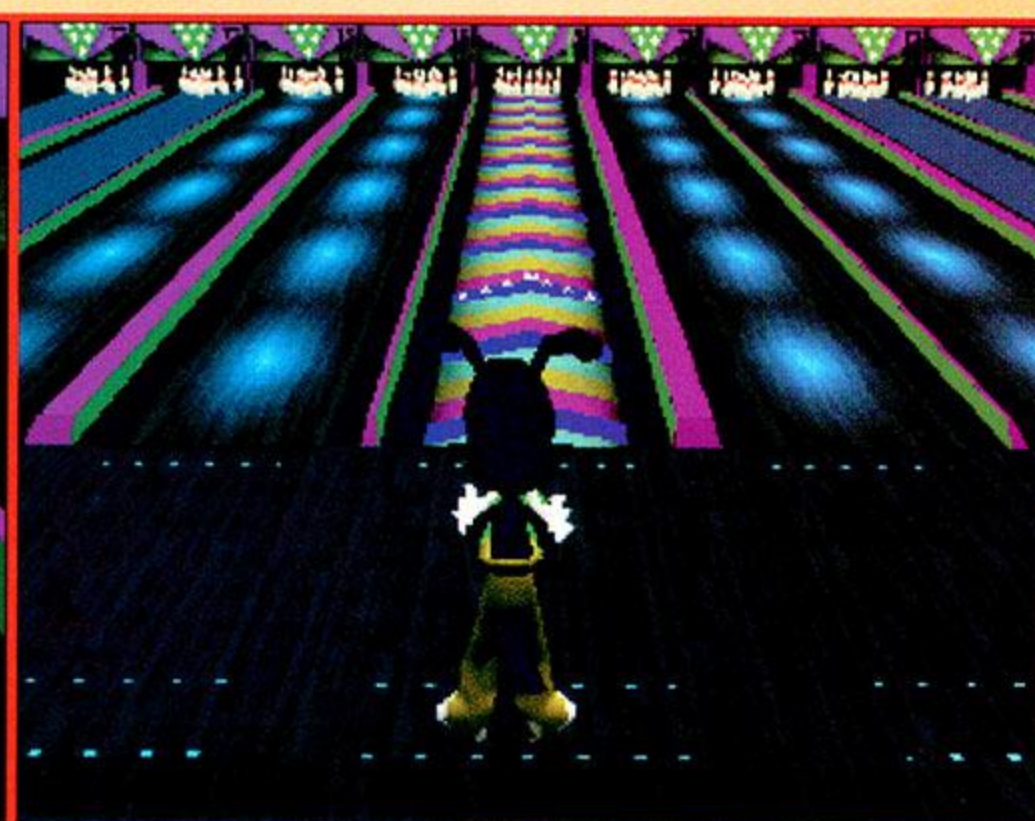
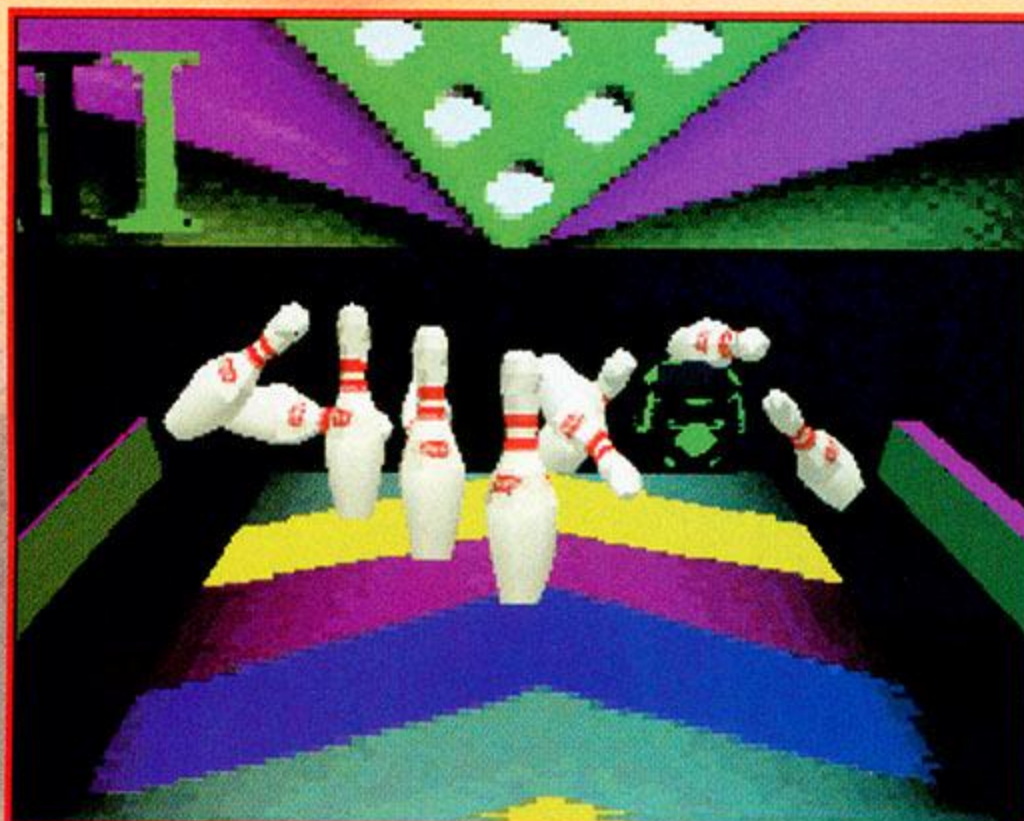
There are four different alleys to choose from—the original Ten Pin Alley, the World Domination Stadium (a single lane surrounded by cameras and grandstands), Boogie Bowl and Wacky Alley. Unlike the midnight bowling option of the original Ten Pin Alley game, Boogie Bowl gives you a lane with flashing lights and a ball which changes colors. The lighting effects are substandard and this lane is hard on the eyes. Wacky Alley is straight out of a Warner Brothers cartoon. Your ball doesn't follow the laws of physics as it heads down the lane in this alley, but for some reason the pins do. The effect throws off your bowling rhythm and the humor wears quite thin.



In fact, that is my main complaint with the entire game—the humor, such as it is, gets old quickly. The cartoon music is very repetitive and tedious and it is the same in every venue. The one-liners delivered by the Animaniac characters are cute to a point, as are their foul and strike/spare animations, but eventually you will have seen them all. Although the bowlers in the original Ten Pin Alley also had humorous animations; the fact that they were human made them blend in better with the game. Here, there is a noticeable dichotomy between the goofy-looking characters and the realistic bowling balls, pins, and alleys. The two just don't mesh that well.

Considering that the underlying Ten Pin Alley engine is at least two years old, I expected a little bit more polish. Unfortunately, this game actually plays slower than the original! It appears that the new designers spent most of their time on character animation and didn't touch the physics model. The lane and pin graphics appear dated and nothing has been improved as far as the controls are concerned. As with TPA, it takes practice to pick your arrow and line up your character—let alone to stop the power and accuracy meters at the precise moment. Since this game is being marketed to kids, the omission of an overhead guideline (as in the Brunswick game) is glaring. Even on the very easiest of difficulty settings, you still need to pick the correct arrow and line up your bowler before taking a shot.

Some traditional sports do well with an over-the-top treatment, NBA Jam and NFL Xtreme, for example. The original Ten Pin Alley, with the character antics and Muzak, found an appropriate balance of absurdity and seriousness. This game doesn't. The music is annoying, the Animaniacs lose their appeal before the 10th frame, and the graphics and physics model could have used a tune-up. The only interesting new addition is the bumpers in the gutters, but this can't carry the rest of the game. Despite the character license and the easier difficulty, younger players won't have the patience to play very many games and adult players will find it too goofy for their liking.



**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**

79%

COMPATIBILITY

**1 to 6
Players**

**Vibration Function
Compatible**

**BRONZE
X**

MARK

BUST A GROOVE

PUBLISHED BY 989 STUDIOS — DEVELOPED BY ENIX

GENRE:
MUSIC/DANCING
AVAILABLE:
NOW

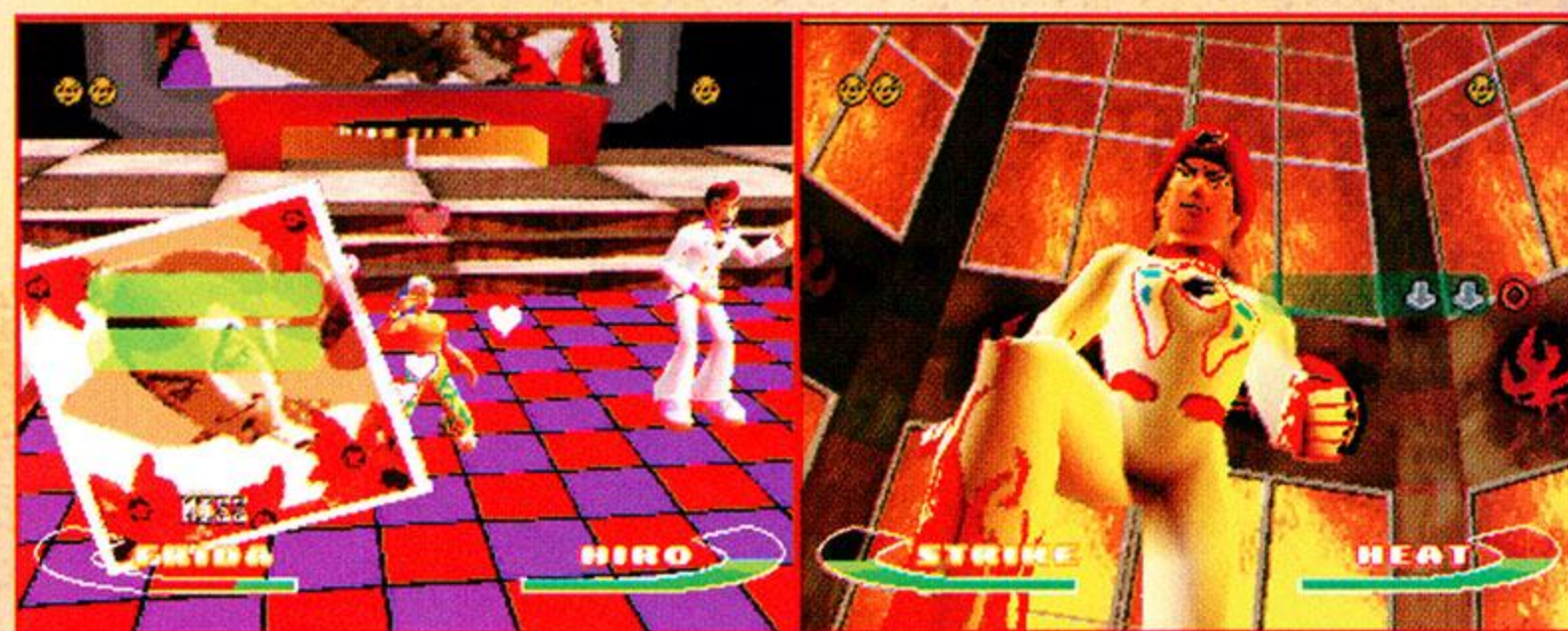


Parappa fans, rejoice. If you loved the combination of kooky graphics and funky music, you're going to love Bust A Groove. Bust A Groove is challenging in the same way as my feeble attempts at dancing are (although Groove isn't nearly as hazardous to those around me and much less socially embarrassing).

Where Parappa could be boiled down to the old "Simon" game set to music, Bust A Groove is a bit more complicated. Instead of pushing buttons in sequence, you've got to input a series of movements on the controller's directional pad, then hit a button in time with the music's beat. Screwing up a combo will cause your dancer to miss a step and slow down, usually resulting in the loss of your turn as the other player then gets a chance to take over. The moves are shown to you on-screen, with arrows indicating the directions you need to press, followed by the button you need to hit to finish the move. The initial dance steps are very easy, usually a single direction. But, as you begin stringing moves together, the number of arrows increases from one to five and the arrows start going in all directions. You're trying to simultaneously keep time (which I can only do by nodding my head violently to the music), figure out which directions need to be entered on the d-pad and hit the button on the right beat. It can get pretty nutty and you'll find your brain turning off when you reach some of the complicated moves (down, down, right, left, left, up) while boppin' to the tunes.

To further the sense of combative dancing, you can unleash (or dodge) an attack on the other player. During certain points in a match, you can hit the triangle button, which hurls a stun move at the other player. Each character has an attack that matches their personality: Strike shoots his guns, Hamm drops giant hamburgers, Pinky smacks you with a giant tarot card. Getting hit knocks the player out for a few seconds, allowing you to catch up if you've missed a few steps and fallen behind. The downside to this is that the computer can also chuck those very same stun moves at your unsuspecting nugget, smack-dab in the middle of a complicated move. You barely get any warning (most characters will make some sort of sound and move around in an unusual way), which tells you that you have just a few seconds to hit the square button to back-flip out of harm's way.

I hate Japanese pop music. Strangely enough, I'm also in love with the Bust A Groove soundtrack. In fact, I actually like the original Japanese music more than the remixed versions in the 989 game. The music tracks remain mostly unchanged, but the lyrics have all been changed to English. 989 has made a few other small tweaks to the game, mostly changes made for reasons of political correctness (Strike doesn't smoke and his hip flask has been changed to a can of pop) since Japanese gamers and their parents are a little more tolerant of such things. Bust a Groove earned my nod for Game of the Year; pick it up and give it some time and you'll grow to love it as well.



**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**

96%

COMPATIBILITY

**1 or 2
Players**

**GOLD
X**

CHRIS

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BUST A MOVE 4

PUBLISHED BY NATSUME — DEVELOPED BY TIATO

GENRE:
PUZZLE
AVAILABLE:
NOW



There are very few games that inspire uncontrollable heated competition within the confines of Dimension Publishing. When Bust a Move 2 shipped in the summer of '96, we almost shut down here, as we couldn't tear ourselves away from the game. Subsequently, the game has been produced for the Saturn (I actually bought that one, too) and the Nintendo 64. No significant differences in either ver-

sion. Natsume is bringing out the sequel and, while the gameplay has retained the same out of control addictiveness, there have been some thoughtful upgrades as well.

Let me just take a minute to give you a little background on what is arguably the best puzzle game series on the PlayStation. Probably the easiest and most addictive puzzle game ever made, Bust a Move sports a cannon at the bottom of the screen, in which you control the firing angle. The cannon fires colored bubbles up to the top of the screen. When you get three bubbles touching each other, they explode and drop off the screen in the one player mode and get dumped on the other guy in the two player mode. Easy enough, right? Well, there's a little more strategy involved than you might think, especially in the two player mode.

In Bust a Move 4, a couple of key enhancements have been added. The first, the chain reaction system allows for some incredible combo moves. When you line up your three similarly colored bubbles, if a different set of colors is with them, the different color will search for a set of its own to pop, setting off some incredible chain reactions. The second enhancement worth noting is the new pulley system. In this mode, you have to eliminate all the bubbles without one side getting lower than the other and consequently hitting bottom, in which case, you lose. All of this is set to the customary wacky sound track, which is almost reason enough to buy the game, and the traditional choice of characters that have their own special features. There are five modes of play, including a challenge and edit mode, along with a grade recognition system to help you review your performance, and three levels of difficulty. Oh, and of course, it's dual shock compatible.

Not every game needs to be a Metal Gear Solid or a Tomb Raider. Some games are just pure arcade simplicity and addiction, which is the category of Bust a Move. The game has absolutely unlimited replay value and is suitable for every gamer on your shopping list. The sound, play mechanics, variety and overall fun factor are unrivaled in this category and, if you like puzzle games, you have to get this game. If you've never bought a puzzle game, this is the one to get, and if you want a break from one of the monster adventure titles coming out this holiday season, this is the game to buy. Basically, just buy the game, satisfaction is guaranteed!



**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**

90%

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 or 2 Players
- Vibration Function Compatible
- Analog Control Compatible



ALEX

APOCALYPSE

PUBLISHED BY ACTIVISION — DEVELOPED BY NEVERSOFT

Shameless, absolutely shameless. Activision's "Apocalypse," an end-of-the-world yarn starring the approaching over-the-hill status action film icon, Bruce Willis, has been languishing within the walls of the Los Angeles-based publishing house for the past two years. It got so bad that the company could no longer tolerate the performance of the in-house team that was working on the project — so they shipped it to

Neversoft and asked them to finish the job. I really feel sorry for the good folks at Neversoft. Obviously, they got paid to try to salvage this mess, but they had no time and certainly weren't being paid to reinvent the wheel. So, instead, Activision settles for a blatant, Contra-esque rip-off of ASC Games' "ONE" (which received a 98%/Platinum rating last year) and throw the action movie superstar's mug and voice all over it.

Apocalypse is, essentially, a straight-ahead shooter with play mechanics much in the vein of "Smash TV." It is best played in Analog Mode with the Dual Shock — where the game allows the player to use the right analog stick for 360 degree firing. The conflict in this control scheme is, however, that the game, for the most part, is played down narrow corridors and the gameplay is very linear. As in ONE, the Bruce Willis character begins the action by escaping from a prison... on narrow paths that are caving in, with all kinds of pyrotechnics... and checkpoints... they even swiped the way that, when you pass a checkpoint in ONE, the icon zooms up as you go through it. The enemies are mostly robots but, for some inexplicable reason, they spurt blood when you kill them! Hummm...

The second level offers up action in the Sewers and this is where you start to notice two things;

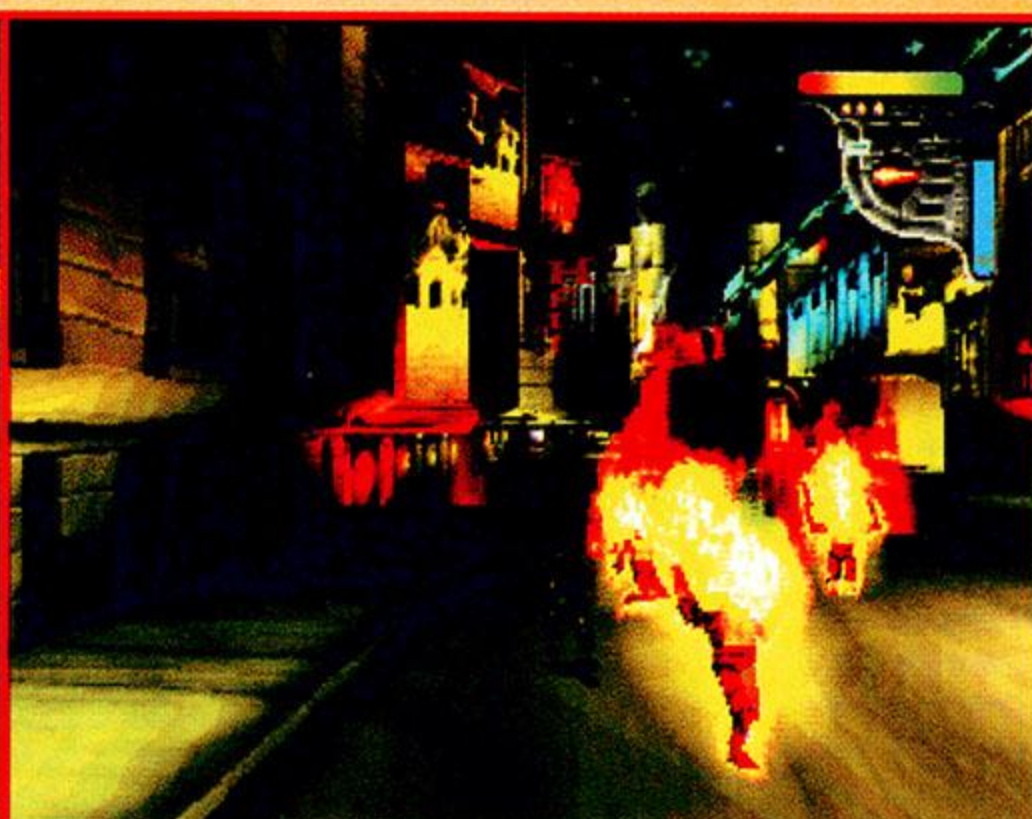
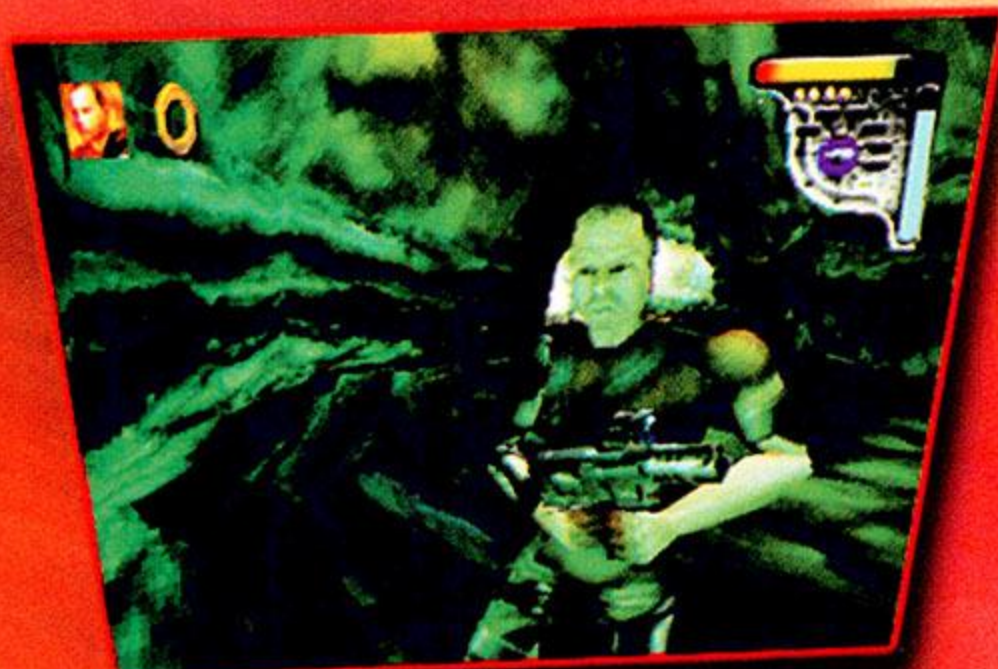
1) The Bruce Willis license was totally wasted, as he is, most of the time, no bigger than a small, 16-bit looking sprite on screen and his voice samples sound as if the design team wasn't satisfied with him simply being Bruce — they had to make him sound like Duke Nuke 'em. Heck, Probe and Fox have a better Bruce in "Die Hard Trilogy," and they didn't pay for him to be there!

2) The level design is very sloppy and not unlike a recent Activision title, "Pitfall 3D." In the sewers, Bruce runs at double speed and gets lost underwater. In level 3, the city level (what would ONE be without it?), the camera is constantly changing and we get "treated" to video of Poe as Bruce makes his way through the city streets. The camera is constantly jerking in and out and, consequently, gives the game a very disjointed feel.

It's not that the game is all bad. It is quick-paced, colorful and will give the average player a certain amount of mindless fun. But, we already played this game, and a MUCH better version of it, for that matter. The icing on the cake is that you know Apocalypse is going to retail for 40-50 bucks, right? ONE can be found at many retailers for \$25 or less. The release of this game smacks of the mentality that says: "It's Q4 — ship it... see if we can recover some of our development losses."

There are times when I truly do not enjoy my job, which you might think impossible... Apocalypse made it happen.

GENRE:
ACTION SHOOTER
AVAILABLE:
NOW



**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player

Vibration Function
Compatible

Analog Control
Compatible

49%



DAVE

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don't find this PEARL
and save
an ENTIRE city,
things are gonna
get
UGLY.



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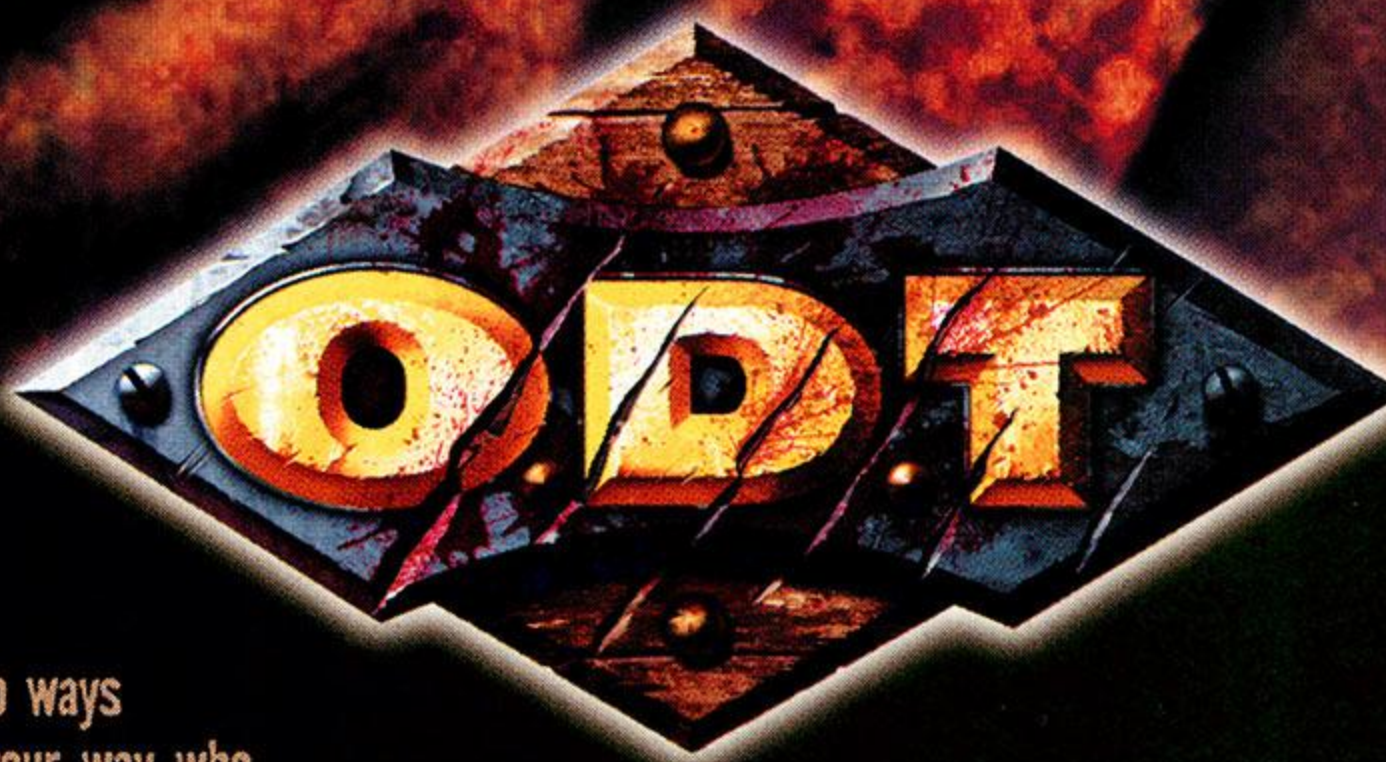
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a candid conversation.

For this month's Excerpt we sat down with Blam! co-founders Jay Minn and Jeronimo Barrera to discuss the company's upcoming action/RPG "Monkey Hero." Minn is currently the president of Blam! Barrera, who served as creative director at Blam! recently left the company to serve as a producer at publisher Take 2 Interactive Software. While "Monkey Hero" is Blam!'s first original title for the PSX the company is not unfamiliar with the hardware. Blam! was responsible for the PSX version of Crystal Dynamic's "Off World Interceptor Extreme" as well as the training demo that ships with the ASCII Sphere 360.

PSEx: How many people have you had working on the team and about how long has the game been in development?

Jay: "Monkey Hero" started up in August of 96.

Jeronimo: At the height of production, when we were doing all the art, there were probably 30 people on the team. I think right now they're down to 10 or 11 people.

PSEx: Where did the idea for "Monkey Hero" come from?

Jeronimo: When we started the company, Jay decided that he wanted to do a game based on a Chinese myth that he grew up with. I knew of the story as well, so we decided to go after this monkey character. We read all the books, tons of books, they're great books. It's called "Journey to the West."

Jay: Or "The Monkey King." It has been around for quite a long time. My father bought me the book when I was five years old and I sort of grew up with the story. I gained my knowledge of game making at Crystal Dynamics and decided if I really wanted to do a game right that I would have to do it myself. I left the company to start Blam! for the sole purpose of trying to make a Japanese-cute RPG action game on the PSX our way.

Jeronimo: In Chinese there are hundreds of volumes, but the English translation is just one book. It's about this monkey who's gotta take care of these people and all these weird things happen to him and just super crazy adventures. It's definitely worth reading, if you haven't read it.

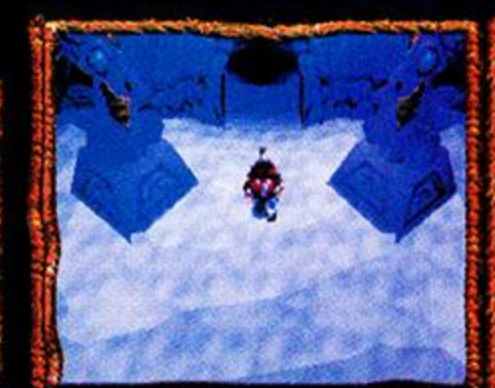
PSEx: How closely does "Monkey Hero" follow the story of "Journey to the West?"

Jay: It doesn't follow the legend tightly. We sort of "gameified" the legend. The original legend is about this monkey who has to find the sacred scrolls of Buddha and bring them back and find redemption for his sins. We sort of shifted that to a battle between dreams and nightmares. So the story is allegorically tied, but not directly followed. Someday I would like to do the actual story as an RPG, but that's a later project.

PSEx: So this is totally an American grown game?

Jay: This is a totally American grown game, but the team members here have a very Japanese sensibility as well. We grew up playing Nintendo, Sega, and Sony games. We're not pigeonholing ourselves into just doing Japanese type games, but we like the cute stuff. I think cute is very tough to do.

PSEx: Why the decision to go with the Anime look?



EXCERPT

Jeronimo: Our entire team, which consists mostly of gamers, loves Japanese games, especially RPG games, so it was sort of a natural thing that happened when we started creating the storyboards. We said, "Hey, we have this really cool idea about this character that is half rock/half monkey. Let's sketch up some ideas," and so most of our guys ended up going with sort of a "Dragonball Z" influenced style. It came naturally, it wasn't a conscious decision that we said "Oh, we're gonna make it look like Anime," it just happened. That's what we thought worked best.

PSEx: What were some of the inspirations for Monkey Hero?

Jay: SNES "Zelda" of course, Game Boy "Zelda," "Allundra," "Landstalker," "Beyond Oasis." As far as the look is concerned we're very influenced by Akira Toriyama of "Dragonball Z," "Tobal Number 2." We really like the look of his characters. Also, we like the colors that we see in Disney movies. The bright, very high color, rich look. That's what we're getting at. The game's coming out very bright, happy, cute looking.

PSEx: What is the demographic you're aiming for?

Jay: We're trying to hit kids that are 8, 9 and up. Maybe a little older, but the ultimate goal is for us to let kids have a good time, finish the game and see the ending, but have enough of the secrets and tough stuff for hardcore gamers to enjoy as well. We also want to appeal to the female audience. I think there are a lot of women gamers coming into the marketplace.

PSEx: What in "Monkey Hero" did you do, what design decisions did you make trying, to appeal to the "female gamer." What makes you think that its going to be successful in that respect?

Jay: We made it so players are rewarded for solving puzzles, much more so than combat, although there is combat in the game. Women tend to like to solve puzzles rather than beating things up. And we've seen that. If you play the SNES "Zelda" it's very, very popular with male and female audiences. We analyzed the hell out of it and asked, "Why is this? Why do chicks dig this game?" We realized it's because they're not forced into having combat interaction all the time. They can bypass that if they want to. And solving puzzles is fun.

PSEx: What was the most difficult challenge that surfaced when you were trying to put this together?

Jeronimo: Just putting together all the actions that Monkey has and making them fit on the PSX. We use prerendered characters that we built in SoftImage. They're sprites, but the world is 3D. We had to make it look proper. There have been a lot of other games that mix 2D with 3D that I feel haven't worked very well. "Loaded" was one example. We basically found a way to make them look like they're little 3D characters in 3D worlds. Trying to keep the look of the characters soft, tons of animations and fitting them all in memory was quite the challenge, but we were able to do it in the end.

PSEx: About how long is "Monkey Hero"?

Jay: We've been watching one of our top tester guys play through it and it has taken him about 15 hours. He knows the game inside and out, so I would say an average player would take about twice that - 30 hours or so for a good gamer to go through and explore. For a casual gamer I would say we're at 40 to 60 hours easy.

PSEx: What kind of gameplay can we expect?

Jeronimo: It's an action adventure with some RPG elements. It's free roaming, it's not level to level. It's non-linear, there is a path that you must take, but there are definitely a lot of different ways to do it. You interact with other characters in the game, there are shops, mini games and definitely really cool boss fights.

PSEx: How are you keeping the player on track without leading them by a leash?

Jay: We gate the player's access to the rest of the world. For example, we have a mega-bracelet that lets you push these big giant boulders, but you don't get that until a certain part of the way through. There are parts of the map that are cut off from you until you have the mega-bracelet. The items that Monkey acquires gate the player and lead them in a semi non-linear sort of way. We let the player explore and make their own story.

PSEx: Are there multiple endings?

Jay: There's one main storyline, but there are a couple of little side quests.

PSEx: Once you beat the game is that it? Is there a secondary quest?

Jay: There will be a secondary quest. We put together a secret ending for people who are crazy enough to go and gather the secret items called dream crystals. They're scattered all over the place. You finish the game with all of them intact, good for you, we'll give you something special.

PSEx: When can we expect the next original Blam! title?

Jay: I would say you can expect the next original Blam! title by the beginning of 2000.

PSEx: Any ideas what type of game that's going be?

Jay: Oh, we have several different ideas. We want to do something along the lines of a new age Super Metroid style of action/adventure. We also have ideas for a giant robot crushing cities kind of game. Those are the things we're interested in right now.

PSEx: What upcoming products does the development team have planned after these?

Jeronimo: There are a couple of things, but they're still really early so I can't mention anything.

PSEx: No hints or ideas?

Jeronimo: Uhm, let's put it this way. Blam! is working on, what's a good clue: "Wizard needs food - badly!"



The PS Extreme Historical Ranking Chart

EXCAVATE is the section where we dig up the last six months of our old ratings and present them on one easy-to-read page, along with a little explanation/breakdown of our rating system. Use this as your buying guide throughout the year and as a reference for those older games that you might have missed (or wish you had).

PLATINUM GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	December 1998	98%
Metal Gear Solid	December 1998	98%
Spyro the Dragon	October 1998	98%
NFL Gameday 99	October 1998	98%
NFL Blitz	October 1998	98%
Medievil	November 1998	98%

GOLD GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
Test Drive 5	December 1998	97%
Colony Wars: Vengeance	December 1998	96%
A Bug's Life	December 1998	95%
Duke Nukem: Time to Kill	December 1998	95%
NHL FaceOff 99	December 1998	95%
Parasite Eve	September 1998	94%
NFL Xtreme	August 1998	94%
Guilty Gear	December 1998	93%
Rival Schools	November 1998	93%
World Cup 98	July 1998	93%
N2O: Nitrous Oxide	July 1998	93%
Jersey Devil	July 1998	93%
Streak	December 1998	92%
WWF WarZone	September 1998	92%
The Granstream Saga	July 1998	92%
Brunswick Pro Circuit Bowling	November 1998	92%
Cool Boarders 3	November 1998	92%
Assault Retribution	December 1998	91%
Wild 9	December 1998	91%
Test Drive: Off Road 2	December 1998	91%
Moto Racer 2	November 1998	90%
The Fifth Element	December 1998	90%
Heart of Darkness	September 1998	90%
Kula World	September 1998	90%
G Darius	October 1998	90%
Bushido Blade 2	November 1998	90%
The Unholy War	November 1998	90%

SILVER GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
Tenchu: Stealth Assassins	November 1998	89%
Trap Gunner	October 1998	89%
Azure Dreams	July 1998	89%
Rosco McQueen	July 1998	89%
Turbo Prop Racing	August 1998	89%
C: The Contra Adventure	September 1998	88%
Road Rash 3D	July 1998	88%
Backstreet Billiards	December 1998	87%
Team Losi RC Racer	October 1998	87%
Madden NFL 99	October 1998	87%

Kartia: The Word of Fate	August 1998	87%
NHL 99	December 1998	86%
NCAA Football 99	September 1998	86%
International Superstar Soccer Pro '98	August 1998	86%
Pool Hustler	December 1998	85%
Motorhead	November 1998	85%
Thunder Force V	October 1998	85%
Elemental Gearbolt	August 1998	85%
Command & Conquer: Retaliation	October 1998	85%
S.C.A.R.S.	November 1998	84%
Resident Evil and Resident Evil 2 Dual Shock	October 1998	84%
Vigilante 8	July 1998	84%
Xenogears	December 1998	83%
NASCAR 99	November 1998	83%
Dragonseeds	December 1998	83%
Running Wild	December 1998	82%
Grand Theft Auto	August 1998	82%
Mortal Kombat 4	August 1998	82%
Future Cop: LAPD	October 1998	82%
Activision Classics	November 1998	82%
Ninja	November 1998	82%
Brave Fencer: Musashi	December 1998	81%
Devil Dice	October 1998	81%
Touring Car Championship	September 1998	81%
Pocket Fighter	August 1998	80%

BRONZE GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
Spice World	October 1998	79%
WarGames	September 1998	79%
Batman and Robin	October 1998	79%
Sentinel Returns	August 1998	76%
Street Fighter Collection 2	October 1998	75%
Bottom of the 9th 99	September 1998	75%
Fox Sports Golf '99	July 1998	75%
Master of Monsters	November 1998	75%
Crime Killers	September 1998	74%
Small Soldiers	December 1998	74%
Bombberman World	November 1998	72%
Super Cross 98	August 1998	71%
Fox Sports Soccer '99	July 1998	71%
O.D.T.	December 1998	70%

TIN GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
Tales of Destiny	November 1998	69%
Adidas Power Soccer 98	August 1998	68%
Bio F.R.E.A.K.S.	July 1998	65%
Circuit Breakers	August 1998	49%

WHAT DO ALL THOSE NUMBERS MEAN?



98-100%

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90-97%

"Must buy" games; each carries our editor's seal of approval.



80-89%

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70-79%

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0-69%

Tin games are to be avoided at all costs. Only die-hard gamers would buy these.

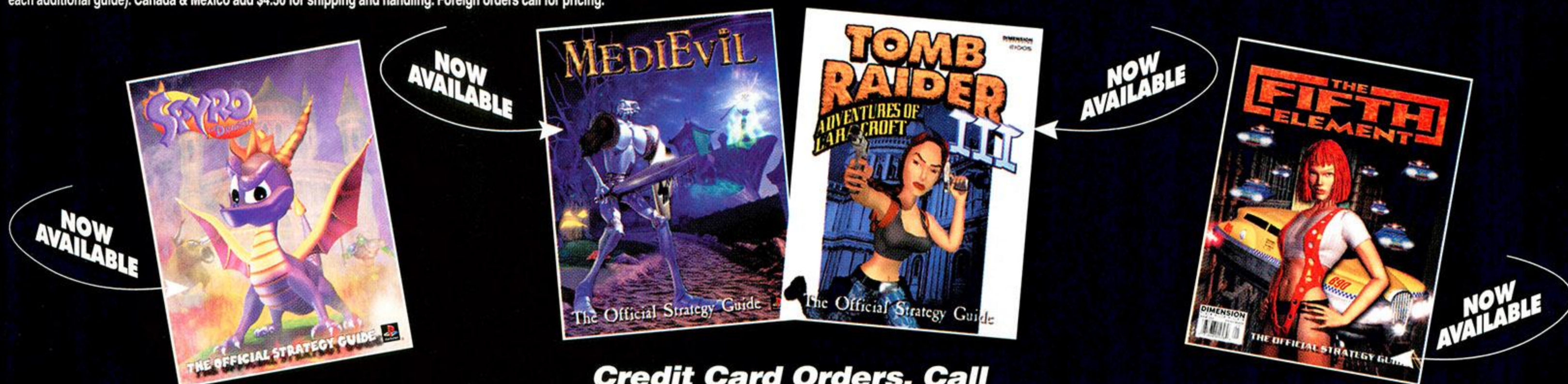
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